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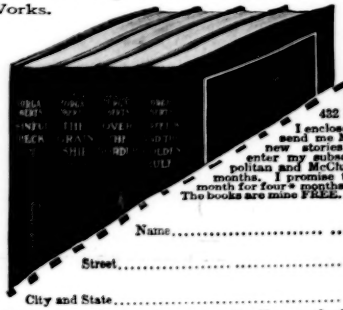

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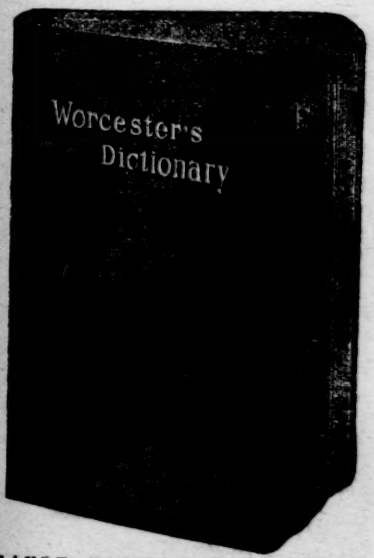

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THE YOUTH'S COMPANION, BOSTON, MASS.

Beyond the Pyramids

BY FLORENCE BRINEY REED

IF Allen Maxwell had not stopped inside the doorway of the little gift shop to avoid the sudden downpour of rain that March day, it might not have happened—but no—it was, of course, all ordained by fate—even to the precise moment of the sudden shower. 'Twas a quaint little place—the gift shop—crowded between great buildings on the busy street. Glass cases filled with jewelry in antique settings—curios—and bits of pottery were upon the shelves; Indian baskets filled the corners—and a portiere of shells and sea-weed pods divided a small alcove where the gentle faced proprietress sat beside a Russian Samovar, drinking a cup of tea, with a white kitten taking liberties with her crochet cotton. She arose at Allen's entrance and came out to the front of the store questioningly. Allen glanced about in search of something which he might purchase as the price of his shelter, but could see nothing.

"I can not see just what I want—was hunting," he said, to cover his confusion—and peering interestedly at the shelves.

"Was it—perhaps," suggested the lady, "a gift for a friend."

"Oh no" he said hastily. "It was a —a dish—something for my cigar ashes—don't you know. It is not easy to find the exact thing" he went on, conscious that he was talking nonsense, but it seemed equally absurd to face the quiet, gentle lady with the simple truth that he had dodged within her door because of the fear of getting a new spring suit wet; so he looked with interest upon the little bowls of pottery and delft which she placed before him, as though the purchase of an ash receiver were as important as house.

"No, these are too—too light. I'd like something that might serve as a weight for my paper also."

"Oh," said the lady, going to a case in the far corner, "here is just the thing, I am sure" and she placed before him a litttle bronze figure. "It is unique. See—and you will not find another like it."

Allen examined it. A shallow bowl, about three inches long, was upheld by four tiny Sphinx. Back of it on a narrow slab of bronze was a kneeling figure of a woman in Egyptian dress with a straight instrument at her side. The figure was in profile —and most complete in detail, even to the tiny scarab which fastened her flowing robes. A unique head dress covered her head, and her hands were slim and graceful.

"Is it an antique?" asked Allen, who rather fancied odd ornaments.

"I do not know, sir—I can tell you nothing about it. However, I hardly think so. The price is not enough for a real antique."

"I'll take it" said Allen, seeing

through the window that the rain was ceasing and the sun struggling out.

"Three dollars. That is too cheap for a real antique," and placing the little figure in a pocket of the light coat he had been so reluctant to get rain spotted, he passed out. He did not think of it again until evening. The threatening clouds which had hung over the city all day had joined together in a black pall, from which the rain came down steadily, persistently, as though determined to make up for the uncertain showers of the day by a good downpour.

Allen came from his club, where he had dined, beneath a borrowed umbrella, and as he entered his room in the bachelor's apartments he flung off his coat with the determination to remain in doors for the rest of the night. A bright fire was burning on the open hearth and he made himself comfortable in dressing gown and slippers and drew up his favorite easy chair within the circle of warmth and light. The cigar box at his elbow on the table recalled his purchase of the afternoon and he drew forth the piece of bronze from his coat pocket and unwrapped it.

"There, Miss Lady," he remarked, setting it on the table before him, "the next time I shall bring an umbrella. 'Twill be cheaper and not so heavy to carry. See that you serve me well."

As he smoked his cigar comfortably, he lay back easily and scrutinized the little dark figure.

"Not a bad little curio—after all" he thought. "Wonder if it is real bronze! It's heavy enough. Might be incense burner—don't believe they'd spend so much time on just an ordinary ornament—'tisn't like a common ash receiver—but—'twill serve."

The lamp on the table burned dimly through a shade of heavy green. Allen was far too comfortable to think of reading, but he reached out lazily and opened a drawer at the side.

"Let's see if I haven't a pastile here—one of those things I bought at that Bazar. Confound it! I seem to have bought a lot of foolish things lately. Ah, here we are—Egyptian pastiles. Just the thing for you, young lady! Here now! I'll christen you with a cloud of incense—fifty cents per box—and may you prove a good Goddess—and we'll live happy ever after."

Smiling at his foolish conceit and words he touched a match to one of the long brownish paper rolls—and as the smoke began to curl up around the feet of the kneeling figure he stretched himself back in the chair. Presently he felt a distinct shock and thrill as though some one had touched him. The smoke from the burning pastile hung like a thick cloud between him and the light. A strange pungent fragrance like burning sandal wood filled the air, and he fancied he heard a sigh. Out of the cloud of smoke appeared a face—a strange, beautiful face—with scarlet lips—long dark eyes—and bands of black hair arranged in a curious fashion—a small, shapely hand brushed the smoke away, and there kneeling before him was the figure of a slender girl dressed in flowing white draperies—in short, a living replica

of the bronze figure. She knelt at his feet—her profile outlined against the glow of the fire like an antique head on a coin.

Allen started in surprise. He felt dazed and wondered if he slept and dreamed. But no, one did not dream of scents or feel the glow of a fancied fire. The air was heavy with the strange perfume and the firelight felt still warm to his slippered feet. His cigar was still burning, and assured that he was awake, he spoke aloud:

"This is queer, very queer. How did she get here?"

At the sound of his voice the girl turned her face toward him. Her eyes looked into his, and he felt a growing sense of her beauty, though conscious that it was not of the type which he was accustomed to see. To his surprise, she answered him in a low, clear voice, that seemed to him strangely familiar.

"I came" said she, "because you called me."

"I called you!" said Allen, more amazed. "Say, am I dreaming or not?"

"For many years we have slept and dreamed" she answered. "Strange dreams have come to both of us—many a sleeping and forgetting. But now, at last, we are together."

"We certainly are that" said Allen, "but how it happened I don't know. Excuse me if I seem a little inhospitable, but this is a little beyond me."

"Soon you will remember" she said, rising and moving forward with slow grace. As she came nearer, Allen unconsciously leaned forward with outstretched arms as though to touch her and know her reality, but just as he leaned forward as though to place her hand in his, he felt again that strange shock and realized he was alone.

His first glance was toward the bronze piece. A few spirals of pale blue smoke were curling up from the bronze bowl and on the floor beside it lay his cigar where it had dropped from his hand, burning a hole in the leather table cover.

"What a queer dream" he said. "Burnt leather and pastiles together got into my brain. But that dream girl was a lovely creature. Too bad I woke up so soon. Me for bed. She may come back."

But there were no more dreams that night, nor for several nights. Allen, as a popular young man of the wealthy younger set, was busy with social entertainmets until one night he was left with a free evening. Again he fell asleep, or dreamed before the fire, and again she came. This time there seemed nothing unnatural about it, and he found himself talking to her of things of which he could not possibly have had any knowledge, of long marches across deserts, of a fountain beneath palms in strange lands, and she passed cool fingers across his forehead commiserating him upon the hard toil. This, since Allen's only toil was to sit up at director's meetings, seemed when he awoke the veriest nonsense, but pleasant, none the less.

Once she laid her soft red lips gently against his hand and murmured that the cruel stone had broken his fingers, but that some day they would be graced by the king's ring. Again

and again, he would have these strange dreams, until he became reconciled to the strangeness of it, and while conscious that it would seem like nonsense if repeated, nevertheless, felt a strange sense of the reality of the girl. Sometimes they would be hurrying across vast wastes of sand, fleeing from some unknown terrors. Again they would rest in the shadow of a great wall, and his eyes would sting as he watched the hot sun burning white on the sand beyond them. Then there were fantastic pictures of a quiet moonlight silvered river and waving palms. And always the girl was there—the girl with the mystic eyes and the haunting smile.

One day when a young man of decidedly Hebrew aspect entered his office and presented a card announcing himself to be a dealer in scarabs and other curios, he did not get rid of him at once, but talked and ended by making an engagement to visit his rooms at a down town hotel.

"It is not me that has the curios" his visitor explained, "but a great uncle—very old. He came from London to see America, and I travel with him and in every city where we stop, we sell—few—just a little—so tonight you see."

In the ordinary little hotel Allen found a man, very old, with long white beard and yellow skin, with piercing eyes and hooked nose. The contents of a battered suit case were spread before him. He looked without much interest.

"Where are your scarabs?" he questioned.

The old man unlocked a sandal wood box, without uttering a word.

"These are very fine—rare" said the young man volubly. "Some of these taken from mummies—royal mummies by my uncle himself."

"Is that so?" inquired Allen good naturedly.

"It is so" said the old man. "Many strange things are so—if we but believe them."

Again Allen felt that strange touch of the mysterious. He picked up a ring at random and slipped it on his finger.

"Wish I knew the story of these things—this for instance." The old man leaned forward, peering at it and then started.

"That," he said slowly, "has a history black like itself. It is a ring of mourning—of death."

Allen gazed at it. The other stones were all greenish gray, or dirty white. This one was black like dull jet. The design was odd—the figure of a beetle—as were all the rest, but encircled with a serpent, which bound about its wings. The setting was gold.

"Here are more in any price," said the young man. "See Mister, this fine lucky set."

"This is the one I'll take, if I take any" said Allen determinedly. The two strangers exchanged glances and the older man lifted his hands piously; "Be it so—they are all for sale—you have chosen."

The young man still endeavored to change his customer's choice but to no avail.

"Here's the money" said Allen. "Twenty-five dollars you say? Not too much, if it's the real thing. Now, for its history."

"That you will have to learn for yourself" said the old man. "Of the black scarab nothing is spoken—strange tales were whispered of it, over there beyond the sands. I was but a boy when I first saw it. But Mister, this much I may say, there are of this kind only two in all the world, this which is now yours, and another."

"And where is that other one?" inquired Allen.

"Alas! I know not—but may good fortune follow you—and I will give you this lucky talisman," pressing into Allen's hand a cheap little pin from which dangled seven colored stones or bits of glass. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, in all, seven days, and a lucky stone for each day."

Allen placed the pin in his pocket. He had seen many like it in the cheap bazars at the yearly carnivals. But the ring seemed to be a genuine curio.

"The black scarab" said Allen. "Tomorrow I'll look it up. There ought to be some books about the things."

He was too much interested in his new possession and its probable history to think of his princess as he had become accustomed to designate the lady of his dreams. But that night the dreams were unusually vivid. They were in a great vaulted hall, where the light came dimly. And she was arrayed in a costume of gauze, thickly woven with golden threads. Scene after scene rolled before him as a moving cimetograph —they were together before a great throne, and sounds of weeping were in the air. Weeping slaves removed her royal robes and dressed her in white garments. An armed guard closed about her, and he knew that they were taking her away. Her head was held like a queen's but she turned and looked at him holding out his arms in a last appeal. She sprang away from those about her and running swiftly down the hall flung her arms about his neck and clung to him.

There was instantly great confusion. He could hear the clamor and hurry of men to and fro, but he could not move or clasp her to him. Perspiration stood on his forehead as he remained like a statue, feeling the arms of the girl cling tightly about him, and knowing some horrible danger threatened, yet he was powerless to avert it.

There was a deafening crash and he awoke to find his arms numb and cold from the cramped position in which he had lain. The brass tongs had fallen on the tiled hearth, which awakened him, and the stone walls and angry crowds of people had vanished. He was alone in his familiar room.

The next day he found his way to the library and inquiring for a book about scarabs was led through one corridor and another to a small room where his guide said cheerfully:

"If Miss Blane cannot find what you want, sir, there is no use to hunt further. She spends all of her time delving in Egyptian."

The girl behind the desk lifted her eyes to Allen, and he recognized, with a start of surprise, the face which so haunted him: the lady of his dreams;

the hair which grew thick and low on her forehead was arranged in modern fashion, and her slim figure was garbed in the conventional blouse and skirt, but the eyes were the same, long and mysterious; the delicate nose; and full-lipped mouth with that haunting smile. By a great effort he recalled himself and making known his errand was soon seated at a table looking with interest at the books she placed before him. But his interest in scarabs had diminished. Every movement of the girl recalled some one of his mysterious dreams—even her voice held every well remembered cadence.

He sat a long time there among the books fascinated by the girl, who, though he knew he had never met before, yet seemed to have an appearance as though meeting him after a long journey. She seemed to have a wonderful knowledge of the history and customs of the early Egyptians, and brought him many books and pictures, but among all the scarabs there were no black ones. He did not dream that night of the girl, but he returned to the library again next day and soon became a regular visitor. There were never many people in the alcove devoted to the Egyptian literature and here he would sit and read and perhaps talk for a little while each day. Once while looking at an engraving of a broken wall of a sarcophagus he picked up a pencil and sketching lines and characters similar to those in the picture, as though completing the portion missing, the girl leaning over his shoulder watched him, and presently she said, pointing with one long tapered finger:

"And right here was the great figure of Râ—the same which was carved on the wall of the arch." Her voice died away as she looked at him with frightened eyes. Allen pushed aside the books and bent over the papers, drawing rapidly.

"Like this?" he inquired. "And here where it is broken off in the picture was the lotus which does not show. The work on the arch was better done. But how hot it was in there." He spoke in a half whisper, and the girl answered in the same tone.

"Yes, but the shadow of the wall on the river side was cool; and the moonlight—"

"Oh—what are we saying? Who are you? And I? Who am I?"

She looked at him with frightened eyes and then dropped her head on her arms.

"Do you remember?" she began.

"I remember lots of things," he answered, "but you most of all. I have dreamed about you dozens of times, until the night before I came here, when a horrible nightmare nearly killed me. I—we were in a hall and something awful was happening—"

She spoke: "Your hands were tied—and they were going to carry you away—oh! I've had that dream over and over—it's horrible," and she shivered violently.

Allen laid his hand over hers protectingly.

"Never mind—they were only bad dreams" he said, as though speaking to a child, but she raised her face quickly:

"Are you sure they are only

dreams?" she asked. "You wear a strange ring. Look!" and she drew from within the folds of her blouse a thin gold chain on which was suspended a small, dark charm—she held it out to him with shaking fingers and within he saw that the small dark object was a black scarab, identical with his, save that the ring was smaller.

"This was given to me by a lady who bought it over in Egypt. She said that there was a story that it had been found in an old mummy case, and because it was so odd, no one would buy it. I had helped her here in the library preparing lists of places and so on, for her to visit, and she knowing my love for such things, brought it home to me. She said an old man gave it to her in return for some kindness and told her it was a rare scarab. I have never forgotten the way I felt when I saw you with that ring on. And those dreams—I thought I was going insane."

Allen laid a protecting hand on the soft hair. She put her hand up to her head, and continued:

"Do you think that I am going insane?"

"If you are—I am also—and I think—oh! well—we'll have lots of experiences to compare—but first let us try to find out something about these scarabs. Is there any one who can tell us?"

"Yes, there is the old archæologist at the Museum—he might tell us."

"We'll go there. When? Tonight?" he questioned.

"Tonight? Yes. I am off at five o'clock," she replied softly.

"Then I'll call here for you. And now—don't—please, don't worry about it.

With a smile she said: "It's almost like the 'Brushwood Boy'—isn't it? Kipling's story, you know."

"Don't know it—but I don't think it's like anything that ever happened to any one— in a story or out of it. Promise me you'll be here at five. I may wake up and find this a dream."

Then as others entered the room, he bowed and left.

At five o'clock he found her waiting—a little pale and nervous—but looking into his eyes with a brave smile as they walked up the avenue to the museum. They spoke of commonplace things and made no reference to either dreams or scarabs.

Walking side by side they hurried to the museum and upon inquiring for the Egyptian Museum man were taken into a room filled with many glass cases containing relics, while several cases of mummies rested on the floor. An old man with flowing beard and black skull cap came to meet them from a little room adjoining. The girl greeted him by name and in a few words she explained that Allen had come to see if this ring which he had purchased was a genuine scarab or not.

The old man bent his head over the small circle which Allen laid in his hand and peered at it a moment. Then he spoke slowly:

"Hum—the black scarab—this is most strange—there is a legend of such a thing—but never—"

"Oh, please tell us!" cried the girl eagerly. "Even if this isn't a genuine

scarab—tell us the legend—please."

"It is long ago" said the old man. "I cannot remember—but—" looking up into the two eager faces before him, "if you will some tomorrow at this hour—there are seldom visitors then—I shall endeavor to look through the manuscripts and find it. This ring, now, I cannot say. It appears good—but there are clever imitations; still I do not see how any one would imitate that scarab. It has a strange story and little is known. Will you leave it, sir? And I can examine it closer."

"I think it is an uncanny thing," replied Allen. "And I'm afraid to leave it, lest I lose my luck. I don't care so much about the stone, if we may have the story."

Walking down the avenue, both apparently thoughtful, Allen said: "Tomorrow night we'll know."

"I can not wait for tomorrow" said the girl, "and yet I'm half afraid."

"May I go home with you?" asked Allen. "And we can talk."

"Oh!" she said, "I have no home. I just board at the Y. W. C. A. It is near the library. It is quiet and safe. My parents are dead. I was just wishing I had some place to ask you to come in for a cup of tea."

"Well, then," said Allen, "you and I will have supper together and we'll go to a play—Miss Ames—at the Association—knows me. That was one of my mother's pet fads and I've always kept up her gifts to it. I'll go there now and wait for you."

While he waited in the reading room of the building, after a brief conversation with Miss Ames, whose stern visage relaxed into a smile as she greeted him, Allen tried to collect himself and think it out rationally—but there was no explanation. They—beyond a doubt had remembered things seen in another existence—and all through the evening every glance exchanged between them—every word spoken seemed merely a renewal of some confidence of long ago. Every trick of gesture and expression was strangely familiar. They both avoided speaking of the dreams or the strange rings, and parted from each other at the bars of the elevator shaft with great formality—but beneath it was the consciousness of a strong bond—unbreakable.

The next evening he called for her at the library and they made their way to the museum rather silently. The old antiquity professor was waiting for them in the little inner room. On the table were piles of yellow parchments, musty black books and scarabs. When they were seated, he said:

"I found the story—but I had to hunt many places before I had it all. Perhaps it is only a legend. But I think not. It may not have anything regarding your ring, but I will tell it to you. I have copied it from many sources—briefly, it is this: 'About the time of the sixth dynasty one of the kings of Egypt had a daughter. She was a damsel of great beauty and betrothed to a mighty man—and it chanced that the king had ordered a great tomb built for his family and among the sculptors there came strangers—and one was young and well favored. And

the eyes of the king's daughter saw him as he sat in the sun at his carving. And she straightway loved him. By the aid of a slave she disguised herself and stole out to meet him, and they met often. She would sit beside him as he worked and his comrades jeered at him for his love for a slave. But it chanced a soldier of the king passing one noontide recognized the daughter of his royal master, and he straightway went and told the king. And lo, the king was so angry that he ordered him instantly slain and then set spies upon the princess and the spies confirmed the story. Then the king himself walked out and saw his daughter steal away from the royal palace one moonlight night and slip through the rushes and marshes down to the river bank, and there she was clasped in the arms of her lover, while on the shining water of the river was a craft loaded with food for a journey.

"Before they could loosen the craft from its mooring they were captured and carried to the Judgment Hall. There before the day dawned all the people were summoned and the wrath of the king was very great. The lover was sentenced to death. The princess was to be given unto the temple to become a priestess of Isis, to work out her forgiveness.

"But the princess defied them all, and openly declared that she rejoiced in her iniquity, and that as heretofore she had chosen him in secret, she did now declare before all the people that he was her accepted lover, and him only would she acknowledge as her lord.

"Then the wrath of the king increased ten fold and he ordered her to be put to death also. Her death was to be a terrible one. She was to be walled in alive in the inner recesses of the tomb which he was building. She was his last child and very fair and young, and his heart was set upon her marriage. Then he ordered her to be clothed in the white gown of the dead and all her jewels to be stripped from her and he ordered his artisan to have made two scarabs of black with the bettle symbol of immortality to be bound, and the words "wicked and faithless" to be graven within. And since there had never been sin like this he ordered that these scarabs should be unlike any ever before, and that there should never again be any like them. So they were made of black.

"And before the guards led the princess away, she turned to look at the lover and seeing his face full of grief and love, she broke away from her guards, ran and clasped him about the neck and kissed him—and it seemed as though the very heavens were moved, for a mighty wind rocked the temple and a great column fell and crushed them beneath it. And so their sentence of death was fulfilled quickly. The body of the lover was cast into the river; the princess's remains borne to the family tomb.

"The black scarabs were placed on them both by the order of the king, but the artisan who made them being young and touched by the great love of the young couple, placed these words, 'Faithful and eternal' on the inside of them instead of what the

king had ordered placed there."

"That, my young friends, is the story—fanciful—but pretty—and no doubt true. If I may now glance at the under surface of the scarab with the aid of my glass I can soon tell."

"Oh, No! No!" cried the girl. "Don't look! Besides, we must hurry. Thank you!" She rose and fastened her coat with nervous fingers, while Allen, seeing her nervousness, hastened to add his thanks and bid the professor good night.

The streets outside were filled with mist and the lights made orange blotches on the damp walks. Neither spoke as they walked rapidly for a few minutes and then Aller saw that she was crying. Taking her arm he lead her gently into the broad doorway of the old church they were just then passing. Then quite naturally his arms were about her and her head was on his shoulder.

"Now don't cry" he said, softly. "All our troubles were over a few thousand years ago. We're alive and together, so what's the use."

"I know," she sobbed, "but it's all so—so queer—please let me cry about it for a minute!"

"Cry away then," he answered cheerfully, "but don't be long, for we've lots to talk about. Of course we'll take our wedding trip up the Nile. And if we find that old Pharaoh's tomb I'll treat it with respect—for I'd rather have you now, than to have eloped with you a few centuries back."

Six months later a matter-of-fact English woman, touring Egypt, said to her husband in their room:

"You know that young American couple who seem so fond of each other? Fancy what a queer thing I heard today. We were looking at the ruins of that tomb on the island—and he said: 'See! Right here is where the lotus border was left unfinished—I suppose when we left, they quit right there.' And she said: 'Yes, and you had planned for it so.' Fancy—and yet this is their first trip, I know—for she told me that she had never crossed the ocean before."

"Well—don't you know," said her stolid husband, "these Americans—they are always doing and saying odd things. No doubt their meaning was perfectly clear to themselves."

And Mr. and Mrs. Allen Maxwell, who were listening eagerly in their own room, on the other side of the thin partition, smiled at each other in perfect understanding.

Posterity vs. Ames Bennett

BY FRANK R. ADAMS

ENNETT stood in the moonlight and contemplated with a sigh the door which had closed gently behind him. On the steps he tortured himself with a recollection of her from whom he had just parted. Lennice Esterdahl was an unequivocal beauty. Charms such as hers would have made a lady's man out of Arthur Schopenhauer. Ames Bennett was more susceptible than the famous misogynist. He had needed no special inducements to be attracted to Lennice. In a general way he liked the sex to which she belonged and in particular he was simply crazy about her as a manifestation of the feminine hypothesis.

He had always known how wonderful she was, but now, with the echo of her refusal to marry him still burning in his ears, her desirability smote him more poignantly. The smooth way she did her hair and coiled it on the tender nape of her neck, the simple, direct gaze out of her clear blue eyes, the slender grace of her and the voice that throbbed like the deep notes of a cello—to think about them was exquisite pain.

If you have never loved anybody like that—well, maybe you are lucky and you certainly have saved yourself hours of misery—but, on the other hand, you have missed an awful lot of something called the phantom of happiness. The ghost of a palm that has rested in yours, the smile you can almost recall, those are the memories that distinguish poets from plumbers.

"I can never marry you."

How can the English language contain such a hideous phrase? "Hanged by the neck until dead," is a cheerful little epigram by comparison.

Yet she had said it and she was looking at him at the time.

"Why not?" he had asked stupidly, stunned by the abrupt disaster of which, to tell the truth, his honest conceit had not warned him.

"Because you are not a good physical specimen," she had told him with no attempt to beat about the bush.

"Eugenics!" he gasped in horror. "How did he get in here—who left the cage open?"

He was floored. He knew that what she had said was true—he was not a good physical specimen. Ames Bennett was the best sporting editor in New York, but when it came to muscular powers he simply was not there. Without his glasses he could not see ten feet in front of him and he had no chest expansion to speak of. Besides that, he was so angular that it took a very skilful tailor to make him look like anything but a hat rack.

Ames was no beauty, but he had a way with him that so far had carried him blithely through life, skirting the pitfalls of accident, dis-

ease and love. If he had not been able to star on the athletic field or win championship honors in the ring, he at least could write about such things more grippingly than any reporter on his staff, and he knew more records and batting averages than the entertaining author of Spalding's Annual. More than one champion glove artist had been dug up by Ames from obscure entertainments held in dingy lofts with a lookout posted below to swap stories with the poor blind policeman on duty.

But now he had run his little chariot into a post. Suddenly everything else he had ever desired sank into insignificance before this girl who was apparently dismissing him.

"Don't you love me?" he demanded. He found that he was on his feet already preparing to go.

"Why," she hesitated, "I don't know. That has nothing to do with the case. I wouldn't marry you, anyway."

"You always laugh at the things I say."

"Maybe I do, but a woman can't always be laughing at her husband."

"Some of 'em are."

"Don't make it hard for me, Ames, dear," she said, her voice full of sweet trouble. "You know I like you and I always thought we'd be married some day, but I didn't realize then how much I owed to posterity. We have no right to marry. It would be criminal. I have had myself examined and there is very little the matter with me—"

"Hear, hear," he applauded vigorously.

"While you—" she paused speculatively, taking in his entire superstructure critically.

"You needn't mention what's the matter with me," he interrupted. "I tried to enter West Point once and they told me."

"While you," she went on, ignoring the interruption and still looking for a place to begin on, "you are a shining example of what not to do for health and efficiency. You smoke incessantly. Why, I've seen you light one cigarette from another,"

"That's economy," he objected feebly. "The kind of cigarettes I smoke are cheaper than matches."

"It's no use, Ames, to try to make me laugh," she said soberly. "I used to be silly, but now I'm going to be sensible."

"If you're going to be sensible," he mourned, "then I suppose I haven't a chance. I'll admit no sensible girl would want to marry a half portion like me. My only chance was for you to develop emotional insanity. You don't know the address of any nice, half-witted girl, do you?" he continued hopefully.

She escorted him to the door in her old-time fashion, but here, instead of kissing him as sometimes she had done, she offered him her hand. She seemed to feel the pointed omission for she said, "It isn't hygienic to kiss anyone."

"Good heavens," he murmured in a daze, "think of the chances I have taken in my life. And think also," he continued regretfully, "of the chances I have missed."

Although he tried to cheer himself up and take the edge off the scene with a jesting farewell, nevertheless,

there was a real ache in his heart as he rode home in the subway to the bachelor apartment at One Hundred and Tenth Street, which apparently was to be his home for the rest of his days.

For a week he moped around the office, messing up the box scores with a fine disregard for the three major leagues, and making an enemy for life of Kid Kennedy by failing to speak of his famous cross arm jab to the point of the chin of Battling Englander, in his recent mixup with that worthy.

The day after his turndown, his naturally optimistic mind had suggested to him that he build up his defective physique by exercise and to that end he had purchased a pair of Indian clubs which he resolved to employ night and morning before retiring and after rising.

His enthusiasm for exercise was somewhat dampened after he broke the chandelier in his room and hit himself twice in succession on the rear protuberance of his rather prominent head. He gave up the strenuous life before his landlady put him out for breakage. It was probably just as well because, without knowing it, he had kept a lighted cigarette between his lips all the time he was swinging the clubs.

At the end of the week he could stand it no longer. The annoying pain in his heart demanded chloroform. He knew that she could not be as desirable as his fancy and memory pictured her. No woman could.

He resolved to prove it to himself. He called her up. "Hello," he said, as she answered the telephone. "Have you a friend by the name of Ames Bennett?"

"Surely," she replied with a thrill of surprised pleasure in her voice; "at least, I hope so."

"Is there any reason why your friends shouldn't call on you occasionally," he demanded, "especially if they can't stand it to stay away?"

"Why no," she replied doubtfully; "I don't think so."

"Then I'm coming out tonight disguised as a friend. You will know me by a red carnation in my buttonhole. I promise not to say a thing that isn't in the etiquette books under the head of 'Sample conversation for a lady and a gentleman who have met for the first time.'"

After dinner that night, Ames stood in front of the mirror in his room a long time, carefully examining his offending physique. Then he deliberately kicked himself twice and with a sigh sought the street, where he purchased a carnation for his coat lapel.

Lennice belonged to the society page strata of the New York population. By that is not meant that she moved in the Vanderbilt set, but that the doings of her friends frequently received mention in the newspapers, especially if the items were sent in. At any rate, her financial status was miles above that of a sporting editor. Her father was popularly supposed to have an underground tunnel connected with the sub-treasury.

There was a butler at Esterdahl's house who let Ames in and ushered him to the living room, where Lennice was improving the shining mo-

ments by reading a ten pound volume of anatomy.

"Good Lord," Ames muttered to himself, as his eye fell on her graceful profile. "She's prettier than I thought."

At the sight of him she rose and a pleased boyish smile illumined her features.

"As I live," he exclaimed, swallowing his heart, which was pounding in his throat, "if it isn't Miss Jones. No? Am I mistaken? Then it's Miss Esterdahl. I always get you two girls mixed up."

"It's nice to see you again, Ames," she said, just a bit wistfully. "You are dreadfully entertaining, and I've been rather bored without you."

"What do you think of Mr. Grey's new novel?" he asked lightly, indicating the anatomy she had been reading. "I think in some ways he is stronger than Robert W. Chambers, don't you? Sex novels are going out, though, I believe."

The butler announced Mr. Robert Howe.

"Robert Howe?" Ames questioned, while the butler went to usher in the visitor.

"Yes," Lennice admitted. "I think you know him."

"If you mean the chap who was champion shot putter and hammer thrower six or seven years ago, of course I know him. We were in the same class at the University."

"He's the one. He drops in nearly every evening for a little while. Father and Mr. Howe are great friends."

Robert Howe entered. Nature had copied some of the best Greek statuary when she put him together. Just six feet, broad in shoulder, but thin in the flank, with a pink-and-white skin that looked as if it had recently been scrubbed, Robert Howe could have been an "ad" for anybody's brand of ready-made clothing without being retouched a particle by the artist.

But when nature had done that much for him she quit. Mentally he was equipped only for horse-shoeing. Still, any man who looked the way he did in a track suit didn't need to be any Socrates.

Not that Robert lacked any confidence in himself. Nothing like that. Everything had been so easy for him that he took it as a matter of course.

"How are you?" he greeted Ames laconically when he discovered there was another caller.

The conversation languished although Lennice strove desperately to keep it alive. The young athlete had a capacity of only one thought an hour even when he was running full speed, and Ames, for his part, couldn't think of anything except sarcastic remarks, most of which he managed to stifle before they reached the open air.

At length Lennice suggested that they take up the rug and dance. "I am teaching Mr. Howe some of the new steps," she explained.

"Oh, yes," acknowledged Ames without interest. Then, apparently without any reference to what had gone before, he added in a moment, "They had a swell troop of performing elephants with the Barnum show this year. Did you see them?"

The girl got his meaning even if

the other man didn't and shot him a reproof with her eyes, which caused him to wilt in burlesque chagrin. "Will you play the piano, Ames?" she asked.

"Sure, Ames, you play the piano," chimed in Howe. "You used to be pretty good at it when you were at college. You will be a lot better than the phonograph."

"I am intensely flattered," the sporting editor contrived to say instead of several other things that crowded to his mind. "Chain me by one leg to the piano and I will make Wagner sound like a Quaker meeting."

While he played aimlessly selections of ragtime and popular waltzes, Ames had a lot of time to decide what he thought about Robert Howe and his relation with Lennice Esterdahl. The deliberate calmness with which the girl was going about her search for the physically perfect specimen, chilled him to the marrow. It was the most cold-blooded proposition he had ever heard of. Under the modern plan courtship could be done away with in favor of a physical examination and marriage would be more like an operation than a ceremony.

Before this evening Ames had rather liked young Howe, although he had never considered him seriously as amounting to much. They had been friends in the way that athletes and sporting editors are always friends, the athlete looking down on the editor with good-natured tolerance and the editor regarding the athlete as a sort of overgrown child.

But now he discovered that he really hated the other and his fist itched to land on the jaw of the six-footer, although he knew that any power he could exert in a blow could do no more than annoy his rival.

When they were tired of dancing, Ames gloomily excused himself on the plea that he had some writing to do. Lennice escorted him to the door, vaguely troubled at his unhappiness.

"I am sorry you can't stay, Ames," she said. "I thought you and Mr. Howe would be sure to like each other because you are both interested in sports. He says that at the next Olympic games he expects to put the shot fifty-two feet. Isn't that wonderful?"

"Uh-huh!" admitted Ames listlessly. "But what chance would he have against a cannon that can heave one of those things ten miles? Tell me, beautiful creature, will you meet me for lunch tomorrow and let me say something you ought to know?"

"Why—"

"Have no fear. I will promise to sterilize myself every ten minutes while we are together," he hastened to supply bitterly.

"All right, then I will come," she said graciously.

"I will expect you at the Plaza at one-thirty," he said on departing, and then added significantly, "alone."

Ames had no definite idea why he wanted to see her. Probably there wasn't any particular reason; in fact, reason was tugging him the other way and telling him never to see any woman again and if necessary take the veil, or whatever it is a man

takes when he becomes a monk.

He felt that this engagement with her on the morrow was going to be the last. It was only a lunch, but it depressed him.

She kept her appointment promptly. He had been there half an hour ahead of time, walking up and down the corridor, smoking cigarettes feverishly.

"You ought not to smoke so much," she reproved as they met. "It will kill you."

He grinned sardonically as he threw away the remnant of his cigarette.

"I gave you an opportunity to reform me," he said, "but now, since you have given me up there isn't a soul in all the world to tell me what I should or shouldn't do. Gee!" he exclaimed with a sigh, "ain't it great to be free?"

They sat in the corner of the restaurant at an intimate little table for two.

"What were you going to tell me?" she demanded promptly, when they were alone, free from the ministrations of the waiter.

"What was I going to tell you?" he repeated vaguely. "Was I going to tell you something?"

"Yes, you spoke about it last night, that's why I came to meet you today."

"If I've got to tell you something I will tell you the only thing I can think of."

"What's that?"

"I love you." He looked at her hopefully, as a dog who expected to be fed might, and then continued, speaking hesitatingly. "Oh, I know I shouldn't have said that. I promised I wouldn't, didn't I? But when every street car rattling on the tracks keeps saying it and the robins in the parks and the policemen on the beat and even the Dago peddlers that go yelling through the streets keep shouting, 'I love you,' instead of 'strawberries,' the way they ought to, why I just can't help joining in."

"You must stop, Ames," Lennice reproved, looking around for fear somebody had heard him.

"Stop? Why talk of stopping Niagara Falls?"

"But you must stop," she faltered. "I am engaged to Robert Howe."

A shrieking silence fell between them. He picked up a fork nervously and laid it down again.

"Engaged to Robert Howe?" he said finally and calmly in a voice which he did not recognize as his own. "You can't love him. You couldn't even be friends with the owner of a mind like his. Why, Robert Howe's think tank is stuffed with cornmeal mush."

"You mustn't say such things and I must never see you again." She rose with the luncheon untasted. "I wanted to tell you first about the engagement before you saw it in the papers, but if you are going to be rude I am sorry I was so considerate." She turned to go. "Good-bye. After I am married I know I shall miss you dreadfully."

Ames sat stunned as she went away. "That's a fine way to begin matrimony, 'After I am married I shall miss you dreadfully.' Great Scott! There may be something in this cave man business after all."

She had said nothing about the date of her wedding, but Ames learned it soon enough through the society columns of his newspaper. No time was wasted. The wedding was planned for a fortnight later, in the church of the Holy Something-or-other on Fifth Avenue, somewhere in the Seventies.

Ames spent the next two weeks in a sort of numb condition, doing his work automatically. The fact that her wedding was actually announced was so stunning that his brain refused to react to it; after the ceremony was over it would be so hopeless. Heretofore he had never quite given up the fond delusion that she was not serious when she had turned him down. Seeing the announcement in cold type removed all his doubts. The calamity was going to happen.

The papers made quite a fuss about the approaching wedding. The fact that it had been eugenically arranged leaked out and the novelty of it attracted a great deal of attention. Robert Howe's position in the world of sport was such that the news of his nuptials was important enough to to be mentioned on the pink page. Altogether there was a lot more limelight about the affair than anybody cared for, especially Ames Bennett, who read every reference with a groan.

The so-called funny paragraphers made material out of it and the cartoonists managed to earn a day's pay on the same subject. To escape from his distress Ames sought the theater. At the first musical show he attended he found the comedian getting a hearty laugh from an interpolated line about the scientific marriage. Ames left the theater for a cabaret and found them singing a song about it.

He went to a bar and sterilized himself thoroughly with alcohol. The physician who gave him the morphia later said that as an amateur sterilizer Ames was a pippin and deserved a medal from the International Association of Distillers and Brewers.

The wedding was to be in the evening. When the afternoon of the fatal day rolled around, the managing editor of the newspaper on which Ames was employed called him into his office.

"I want to talk to you, Bennett," said the "Old Man," so called because he was the youngest managing editor in New York.

"All right," said Ames with gloomy nonchalance. "I don't blame you if you don't like the way I have been doing my work lately. I admit it is rotten."

"I didn't say anything about your work," said the managing editor with some surprise. "What you have done is all right, or if it wasn't I didn't notice it. It's what you haven't done that I want to speak about. I haven't seen a single reference on your page to the Howe-Esterdahl wedding."

Ames groaned.

"Every other paper in town has had some good funny stuff in the sporting sheet about this marriage and the kind of children they will have. Great Scott, man, where is your sense of humor? Robert Howe

is one of the foremost athletes in the country and people who read the sporting page are interested in his wedding, especially under such novel circumstances."

The sporting editor rolled a pencil uneasily between his two palms. His soul was writhing under the unintentional torture his superior was inflicting upon him. He dared not trust himself to speak for fear he would betray his emotions.

"I'll tell you what you do," the managing editor went on, wondering if Bennett, who was usually voluble, had lost his powers of speech, "you go over to the wedding tonight at the church and see what happens and then come back to the office and write a funny feature story about it."

"A funny feature story," Ames repeated in horror, exasperated beyond endurance. "Don't you know that this wedding is the biggest disaster since the Titanic? And you ask me to write a funny story about it!"

"Why, what do you mean?" said the other in surprise, gazing with friendly concern at the young man, who was rapidly enveloping himself in cigarette smoke.

"Don't ask me," Ames returned moodily. "I'll do it. If you want a funny story about how it feels to have your leg cut off, I'll go to the hospital and get the material. It makes me laugh now when I think how funny it is. Ha! ha!" He croaked hoarsely.

Still chuckling mirthlessly, Ames left the office and proceeded to his apartments to dress for the ceremony, which he purposed to attend in the double capacity of guest and newspaper humorist.

The church was crowded to the doors. The ushers had difficulty in keeping the aisles clear. Apparently none of the invitations were unused. Everyone was curious to see this bride and groom of a new régime mated under perfect physical conditions.

Ames managed to effect an entrance, however, by proclaiming his relation with the press. He discovered that he was not alone in his glory. There were a dozen other reporters occupying front seats, as if it were a baseball game or a great legal battle.

They welcomed him with merry jests about the coming performance. They did not know that he was acquainted with the bride.

At last the ordeal began. There seemed to be countless preliminaries. Reams of music had to be played and a great many ordinary looking people had to parade around in new clothes, the men looking miserable and the women proud. The majority of the members of the male sex view the hobbling of one of their number with apprehension. You never can tell who will be next.

The groom came in. No king could have carried himself more proudly. He actually seemed to like it Ames recollected having seen him strut before a grandstand in the same way, clad only in a track shirt and trousers. Now in evening dress he was a no less commanding figure. The sporting editor admitted bitterly in his inner consciousness that his rival looked like a perfect mate for

the most beautiful girl in the world.

The women in the audience agreed with him. An almost perceptible gasp of admiration fluttered through the air as he walked down the aisle with his best man.

Then slowly, with head raised proudly, came the bride and her father.

Ames's heart sank like a leaden shot. How could he say anything funny about her with his heart telling him she was the most wonderful creature in all the world and he was just about to lose her.

If she would only trip on something and fall or tear her train, maybe he could make something funny out of that. But no. There was no hitch in her progress, no obstacle, nothing seemed to stand between her and her future husband.

The organist was playing softly a quiet, well-bred air, the scent of flowers drifted in on a slight breeze, swaying the silken decorations, which were strung like a canopy from the altar and the balcony to the dome.

Finally Lennice stood side by side before the minister with her physically perfect mate. After interminable seconds he addressed them. If something funny would only happen now! Bennett groped fruitlessly in his brain for a comic idea. There was none.

All at once a single feminine cry pierced the hush which pervaded the church.

There was an uneasy movement in the congregation. People turned to ask their neighbors what had happened.

The minister paused in his droning recital of the marriage service.

"Fire!" the cry which makes your heart stop, raced shrilly to the vaulted ceiling and echoed back again. Scarce less rapidly tongues of flame began flickering around the ends of the silken ribbons which were attached to the altar rail. A loose end of ribbon had been blown by the wind into an open candle. The fire rapidly communicated itself from ribbon to ribbon. Little darts of flame raced up the narrow strips of cloth to the dome. As each ribbon burned off at the rail it swung, a line of fire, out to the middle of the congregation.

The women huddled back into the pews, terrified beyond action by the tiny flames that were swinging in their faces.

Then all at once a voice was heard addressing them authoritatively.

"There is no danger," said the voice, proceeding from a thin young man who had unceremoniously pushed the minister aside and taken his place on the platform. "If you will file out quietly, the forward aisles first, I will guarantee to get you all out safely."

Sparks were falling from above, but for some reason the crowd listened to this curious young man who so confidently guaranteed safety.

"The organist will play a march," said the young man peremptorily, looking up to the balcony where the keyboard of the organ was concealed.

There was no response from the organ.

"The organist unfortunately had another engagement," said the young man.

All at once the organ burst forth

into a clamorous riot of music. The air was "Too Much Mustard," which had probably never heard itself played on a church pipe organ before. It served its purpose though. Everybody laughed and then accompanied by a rapid fire of directions from the young man at the altar, they filed out in fairly orderly fashion, while the lurid flames from the burning decorations made curious lights in the dim heights in the church.

At last everyone was out. The church was empty save for the young man and the organist.

"You can cut that out now," said the young man, addressing the invisible player.

From overhead the sparks were coming down like rain and an unpleasant smelling blue smoke swirled through the air as the wind from outside played pranks in the vast audience hall. Hardly noticing these things and certainly forgetful of the place where he was, the young man at the altar thoughtfully inserted a cigarette between his lips and lit it from one of the altar candles.

Down the steps from the tiny balcony where the organ keyboard was concealed came a person in what had previously been a white brocaded satin dress. It was now soiled in several places with cinders, and the remnant of a chiffon veil which had been hastily torn off was draped rakishly about her ears.

In the dim light at the altar the young man perceived the dress before he noticed the features.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, "I didn't know the organist was a girl or I never would have asked you to stay. I have to admit that you've got good nerve." Then as she came closer to the altar the light illumined her features completely. "Well, I'm damned."

"Hello, Ames," she said calmly, looking him over curiously and noting with a quizzical smile the cigarette he was smoking. "You are a brave man, Ames."

"Not very," he returned with a half smile. "You see, I knew this church was fireproof construction and that there wasn't any chance of anything burning except the decorations. For pure bravery you are entitled to the nickle plated coal scuttle. How did you come to be playing the pipe organ?"

"Why," she returned modestly, "when I saw that the regular organist had run away, I just happened to be nearest so I went up and did it."

"Gee, you are a wonder," he said, taking in her ragged wedding costume from head to foot. "I don't know any other girl in the world who would have done that."

She returned his look with shining eyes. "And I don't know any other man in the world, Ames, who would have handled the crowd the way you did. You sure have a way with you."

"Well," he said briskly, wishing to change the subject from the one that was breaking his heart, "let's get out of here and hunt up Mr. Howe and the minister so we can go on with the wedding." He looked at his watch. "I've got to get into the office with a story about this in half an hour if I am going to make the first edition."

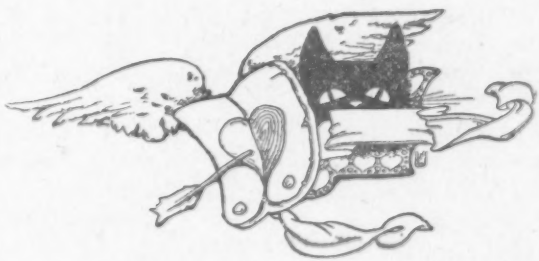
The ribbons had burned themselves

out and save for a few smoldering strands the fire had practically extinguished itself.

"Never mind about Mr. Howe," said Lennice, linking her arm in his. "Here is the minister coming back and he is all we really need. From the way Mr. Howe started he ought to be about Forty-second Street by now, so we won't wait for him to come back. If we hurry we can get through in plenty of time for you to get the story in the first edition."

Without any particular regard for hygiene or scandal, Ames Bennett kissed the eugenic bride full on the lips, right in front of the minister.

"The funny part about it," he explained a little later, "is that I didn't set fire to the church myself."



The Lift

BY J. BERNARD LYNCH

ROM his too-lofty studio, Gus White, photographer, looked into the heart of the morning sun with dull, unappreciative eye.

His stunted vision pictured only a world grown colorless and flat. In the unceasing hum of commerce that reached him from the busy streets, a discordant note predominated. That note was vividly at variance with the studio silence—a despairing stillness unbroken by a customer's voice for three whole days.

He seized hungrily the remnants of a discarded perfecto, applied the match, and stared in miserable indolence at the smoke rings that detached themselves from the haze of blue, and lived a dreamy life in the stagnant quiet, until each flattened against the dusky skylight.

With dream-thought wings he soared until a quick step on the stair brought him back to the imperative present. The door opened and he went forward, expectant.

Alas, the hopeful expression gave way to the habitually wistful one, when he recognized the visitor as "only a friend." In silence he returned to his chair and rummage-perfecto.

In this abode of doleful dumps, the caller was cheerful.

"Greetings and salutations, Gus," he remarked. "How's business?"

"It may be all right," returned the other, in a dark blue tone picked out with brown, "for all I know. I haven't seen, heard, or even flirted with any for seventy-two hours."

"Fickle jade! How d'ye account for this wholesale desertion?"

"I don't. Problem's too big for me. But I might hazard a guess that one slight contributing cause is the fact that the way into my parlor, as that of the spider's, is 'up a winding stair.' Up three flights of 'em, to be exact. People, nowadays, expect to be treated like the Queen of Spain, on a supposition of not having any legs. They won't walk; they visit you only when you're approachable in an elevator!

"You mean a lift," remarked the visitor.

"No, I don't. I may be a good many fool things, but I'm not giving up a good, plain, understandable American term to ape the Anglomaniacs. You've become so darn British ever since you launched a member of that English Pony Ballet!"

"Nice girl. Looked like an angel, and consumed two pounds of beefsteak and a quart of pale ale to her own whack at luncheon. Little, but how she could dance. The vim was all there, just as all our long-winded 'elevator' is found in the tiny, one-syllable 'lift.' Take your head in, Gus, and listen to me. Or is there an attraction down in the street?"

"No attraction other than the fasci-

nation a busy place has for an idle fellow. I guess I'll have to pull out of this joint. I believe I'm wasting time on a foolish venture."

"You'd get enough to do if you'd cease being so infernally ordinary and commonplace," commented the caller.

"But I am just ordinary and commonplace," replied Gus, irritably. "And all I want is the ordinary dollar from the ordinary citizen for very ordinary work. There's nothing spectacular about me or my job, but I'm capable of giving a fair return for all the confidence placed in me."

"Bah! You talk like a copybook in the days when we wrote Spencerian hand. 'Tis written by those expounding the doctrine of commercial philosophy that if a man makes a better mousetrap than any other man, he will be eagerly sought, even though he choose to dwell in a wilderness or on the sands of Sahara. Now—"

"Say, what are you driving at? Question of my ability?"

"Not at all. Don't get hot under that extraordinarily high collar of yours. I'm just questioning the truth of the mousetrap proposition. Your mousetrap—excuse me, your artistic product—is all to the merry. You're giving 'em as good at six dollars the dozen as they hand out in the highbrow section at thirty dollars. I call you a first-class performer in the photographic arena. Now quality and individuality are the magnets drawing the needles of business. You've got the quality. But you're wallowing in the mudruts of mechanical custom and have allowed your imagination to go to seed."

"Fine!" sneered Gus. "You talk like some fellow whose living depends on a typewriter plus a perfervid fancy."

"Well, both commodities could be used in your business."

"Let you tell it!"

"Exactly. Now you think business is slack because you suffer from too many stairs, too few nabobs in your showcase, too many dingy corners in the studio, too few tapestries and padded sofas to lighten them up, *et cet, ad nauseum*. What you need is a publicity promotor. And when I say pub. pro., of course I mean a good one, who wouldn't balk at operating with a Chinese laundry for base."

"I suppose," gloomed Gus, "you imply your humble self?"

"Just so—minus the qualifying term. Well, goodbye, Gus."

"What's the rush?"

"Oh, when I'm entering into a new line of employment I'm always impatient until the job's well under way. You don't know it, Gus, but having promised to pay me ten per cent. on all business that comes in tomorrow, it behooves me to hustle out and push said business up those twisty stairs. Besides, I'm a trifle short myself, just at this juncture, and if I happen in on the manager of 'County Kate' at 5.30 he may think to invite me to dine."

Gus stood open-mouthed while the door slammed, then reopened to this, "Please have furniture, self and plates showing a clean and morning face tomorrow, and if a damsel enters and refers to the absence of a lift don't smite her—but just put two dollars extra on the bill and appease your

Yankeedoodledum that way."

The rest of the day gloomed itself into limbo, and Gus arose to what he supposed would prove its replica. Still, there was something in that volatile chap's hints about the dingyness of the place. Before nine o'clock he had done much in the way of polishing brass, brushing off the dust of indifference, changing the weather-worn pictures in the sidewalk showcase to fresher samples.

He had just washed his hands and deliberated as to what form of time-killer he should adopt, once the daily paper might be finished, when his heart gave a thump. It was—footsteps approaching, and a swish of silken fabric on silken fabric told the visitor was no such disappointment as that of yesterday.

A vision of white femininity penetrated delicately into the morning air of the studio.

"Mr. White?" she queried, in a tone of slight bewilderment, as her gaze took in the paltry surroundings.

"Yes, I am Mr. White."

The dainty little person arched a doll-like head, while eyes of baby blue rested ardently on the dark corridor from whence she had just come. Then, with a jump, she seemed to remember where she was, and that she had an errand there.

"I want a sitting," she observed, carelessly.

"Yes. Will it be postcards? I can give you some excellent results at four for fifty cents."

"Decidedly not," with impressive dignity. "I want a dozen of your best cabinets. Or—at least, something about twelve dollars."

Gus calculated rapidly. His best were about six dollars. Probably she meant to give an order for two dozen. He had just motioned her into the alcove which a few wire hairpins and a hand glass endeavored to metamorphose into a dressing room, when the outside door opened again and two more ladies entered. They were expensively gowned, and anticipation, of some sort or other, was written plainly on their handsome faces.

"Mr. White's studio?" And they, too, looked around curiously.

"Yes. May I be of service?"

"Well—I think we will sit for panels. Don't you fancy panels, Maud?"

Maud said she did; at the same time smoothing her long gloves and looking everywhere but in the glass case, where Gus was anxiously setting forth the few samples of panels in his possession.

"What d'ye think of these?" asked the first speaker.

"Very good indeed," returned Maud, who hadn't given them a glance. Instead, she meandered to the window and seemed to be taking a view of the other side of the way.

"Will you pose together?" asked the photographer.

"Certainly not. My friend will sit first. Oh, and the price—"

Gus was wondering whether to stick to twelve dollars, or drop a few pegs, when Maud turned.

"The style you have downstairs, at fifteen dollars, is very nice," she observed.

Gus hastened in to dispose of his first client with a feeling that he had better wake up. This lasted all through the sitting, and even the six

real dollars she left as deposit did not dissipate his impression of being in a dream, for there were Maud and her friend with even larger sums burning in their mesh bags.

And ere they were disposed of there came another influx, all feminine, all exquisitely dressed, all anxious to sit and simper on the polished settee of his inane "garden scene," facing his so long unemployed camera. Number four considered eighteen dollars was quite enough to pay. After that Gus accepted what they offered and made out receipts mechanically. Singly they came, and in trios and quartettes, smiling happily, generously surrendering neatly folded bills from dainty purses.

Gus had little time to think, as he went about his duties and saw his stock of plates diminish with gratifying rapidity, while the cash drawer rang rapidly and often. The rush kept up, until the scene took on the aspect of a D. A. R. convention with all delegates in harmony. Clients lined the walls in serried white, flowed into the gallery *en masse*, exuded delicate perfumes, and indeed, seemed a rosebud garden of girls, with Gus buzzing proudly as king bee thereabout.

Shortly after high noon his plates ran low, but he 'phoned to a nearby fellow photographer for a loan, and when the boy arrived sent him out for coffee and ladies' fingers. He could afford to offer the hospitality he had seen in better supplied galleries, and the ladies really needed sustenance, since each one now had to wait for several preceding customers.

Not until the dusty office clock pointed to the hour of four, was there any cessation in the inflow of femininity and greenbacks. Gradually the assemblage thinned and as the city clocks chimed the half hour, he escorted the last remaining trio to the door, bade each a pleasant adieu, and sank weakly into a chair. Silence again reigned in the studio.

Hush—a stealthy footstep—the door slyly opens. Is it a robber? Well, he will give up his hard earned cash only after a fight.

Again it was "only a friend." As before he began, "Greetings and salutations, Gus. How's business?"

Gus didn't answer, because he was so busy turning up his nose at his friend's get-up. Real English it was, from the clothes bespeaking Poole of London, to the shining top hat, the neat spats, the very becoming monocle.

"Rawley, old top," he remarked, "it's a bally shame, don't you know, to expect a chap to give you a look-in daily when the lift's not running."

"You'd better get out of those masquerade clothes if you expect to be a welcome guest here," snapped Gus.

"Masquerade clothes—my word!"

"Yes. You look like a darn fool."

"Be quiet a jiff, Gus, and I'll make you look like one. Business picked up some today?"

"I should say it did. One continual rush from start to finish. And the queer thing was, my prices kept rising without my saying a word."

"It's a good game that does its own boosting. However, I'm now going to cover your head with heaped-up coals of fire and leave you so doggoned grateful to these glad rags

that you'll be begging them to dress up the suit of armor you're bound to have in your artfully redecorated studio in the Back Bay section. For it's to this coat and these spats, with other accessories, that 47 Hanover Street owes its sudden rush of prosperity to the top floor. You, look painfully disillusioned. Haven't you been called upon by a large number of the feminine sex today—didn't all have sittings, order photos and leave deposits? And didn't each one say she would call for the finished work? Well, she will call, and she will in every case autograph a thirteenth picture. Suppose you print but twelve? Better think twice, Gus. The bakers' dozen is a good number to stop at."

But Gus was giving himself sundry pinches and exclaiming, "Now I know I am snoozing."

Then he became aware of a folded paper which was being inserted under his nose, and of a marked paragraph under the heading "Personal."

"Dear Madge:—

"Lord Irvington, of Cliveden, Berks, England, whom dame rumor saith would not be averse to an American bride, has formed a most unique plan of securing the loveliest of faces from which to make a choice. His private secretary is to secure a copy of every photograph made in a working day at one photograph studio; and for this city the favoured studio is Mr. Augustus White's at 47 Hanover Street. Obscure and unknown may both Mr. White and his studio be. My Lord's reason for favouring such an artist is the wish to secure unaltered replicas of nature, minus even retouching. Furthermore, 'tis whispered His Lordship is a believer in chirography. What a pity the selected photoes cannot be autographed by the fair ones!"

"And those benighted females read—and credited—that bosh?"

"Swallowed bait, line and sinker. I had only to lurk by the door in my London togs—'twas enough. I made up for the secretary, but half the doves undoubtedly believed me to be His Lordship in person, looking for her future Ladyship *incognito*. And then, when they didn't come too thick, I could make considerable play by a start of delighted surprise—as thus!—and dropping my cane inadvertently—as thus! Then she believed I was so struck by her transcendent beauty that not another female had a chance, were she Venus, Pallas, Athene and—give me another good-looking female of classic times Gus—"

"Cassandra!"

"Thanks! I prefer Diana—tied in a bunch. Well, what's the sordid intelligence of the cash?"

"Four hundred dollars."

"Fine. You owe me ten per cent., recollect. And also a trifle for expenses—lamp black and a brush, as well as bristol board on which to paint a series of your astoundingly inflated prices."

"Oh, so you're responsible for them, too?"

"I sure am. All of which proves, my dear Gus, that every business needs publicity some of the time, and some businesses need publicity all of the time, and no business but needs—"

"I've heard it before," interrupted Gus. "Here, let those ladies' fingers alone."

"Want 'em for souvenirs? Certainly. They're only appetizers, any way you put it. Let's borrow five dollars from each other and buy ourselves a regular meal."

"Babe" Fisher Redeems Himself

BY HAROLD DE POLO

BABE FISHER, wanted for the killing of one "Red" Ginnis, "bad man," sat at a table in the *Welcome All Saloon* in the little mining camp of Silver Gulch, playing a small, friendly game of poker with several miners whose acquaintance he had made some two hours previously, when he had stepped into the rough shack and told the proprietor to "set 'em up on me!"

"Babe" Fisher,—so called in consequence of his youthful looks,—did not at all appear the kind of man that was wanted for murder; he was big, blond, blue-eyed, with a smiling, open face and a merry twinkle always sparkling in his eyes and a pleasant note always dominant in his voice.

But for some months, now, he had been hunted by the law on the charge of murder, and had finally made his way to about the wildest spot in Arizona that he could possibly think of;—therefore his presence here, where no startling sign met his glance that told him there was a reward of five hundred dollars for his own body, dead or alive.

But the peacefulness of the game was suddenly broken in upon, without the slightest bit of warning.

Those in the room presently saw a man enter, tall, slim, cat-like, his narrowed grey eyes cold and steady, his thin, bronzed face set and determined, and his right hand grasping firmly a long, blue-steeled revolver, thrust out before him.

They saw "Babe" Fisher spring up from his chair, kick it behind him, and flash his hand straight to his hip! But he was too late! The other man's gun instantly spurted and cracked, and the big, blond fellow muttered an oath and dropped his pistol, clutching his forearm where the other's bullet had ploughed through his flesh.

The lean man walked forward, still calm, his gun covering the other. He moved aside the lapel of his well-worn coat and displayed a nickel star that proclaimed him sheriff of Oneida county. Then he reached to his back pocket and produced a pair of glittering handcuffs. Not a word had been spoken as yet.

Fisher eyed him speculatively, wondering whether or not to reach for his weapon and take his chances of making a getaway.

"Better not!" cautioned the sheriff, quietly but firmly.

The other eyed him for a moment longer, then he smiled. "Guess not!" he said, pleasantly, and stretched forth his arms for the manacles.

"Don't reckon I've made a mistake, hev I? Yo're 'Babe' Fisher, wanted fer the killin' o' 'Red' Ginnis, eh?" the sheriff stated, rather than questioned.

His prisoner nodded his head.

"Yep; an' I knowed if anyone'd git me it'd shore be yuself, Evans!"

"Thanks!" answered the other, smiling, and he put the handcuffs on the offered wrists. "Reckon we'd better be settin' out, fer it's a good two days' ride acrost the desert tu Latima!"

And in a moment more the two were gone, leaving the crowd shaking their heads and swearing that they'd be hanged if they'd thought that agreeable young chap was a "bad man"!

Toward the end of the next day, as the big, blood-red, ball of sun was quietly dropping from view behind the hazy, violet-tinted horizon, the sheriff and his man were slowly making their way across the hot, sun-baked, dusty desert, bare and desolate except for a stray cactus plant or so that loomed gauntly up out of the sand, throwing its shadow over the hot alkali in a tempting manner, reminding them that there was such a thing as cool shade somewhere in the world.

They walked their horses at a crawling pace, Fisher in front, his head bowed, his manacled hands grasping the reins listlessly; the sheriff a few feet in his rear, his head, also, bowed, for the day had been a scorching one.

Presently he paused. "Gee," he breathed, "some warm, eh?"

"You bet!" replied his prisoner, turning in his saddle.

"Guess we'll hev tu take jest a *leetle* more water!" said the sheriff, frowning nervously.

"Look here," burst out Fisher, "go ahead yuself, man, I don't need it. There's mighty little left, an' I'll be a deader 'afore long!"

The sheriff flushed. He liked this man whom he was taking to his doom. "Keep still, Fisher, it's my fault fer spillin' that other canteen a while back!"

The prisoner agreed to take a sip, and did so. Then the sheriff followed suit, and after that he took out a pack of cigarettes, lit two of them, and handed one to his man.

"Thanks, sheriff; yo're white!" said Fisher, gratefully, and puffed contentedly.

"Aw, move on!" answered the sheriff. He did not like praise, even when he deserved it.

Fisher clicked to his horse, and they went along at the same easy walk. The prisoner wished, as never before, that he had not got into that trouble with "Red" Ginnis and found it necessary to kill him. He would have greatly liked to be able to ride with this man behind him as a friend, not as a captive. He had formed a staunch attachment to him during their brief acquaintance; for the sheriff had bathed his wound, bandaged it, and cared for it in the same tender, soft-fingered manner of a mother nursing her child; he had spoken kindly with him; he had gone share and share alike, with food, with water, with cigarettes; and he had treated him, not as an offender against the law, but almost like an old friend, while only the handcuffs told of his real position.

Presently the sheriff again broke the silence. "Reckon we'll hev tu ride all night, pard, so's tu git tu

Latima 'afore we're nigh dyin' fer want o' water!"

The prisoner, thinking of what lay before him when they reached their destination, could not refrain from letting his shoulders droop and his head hang lower on his breast.

The sheriff was a decent man. "I—I'm sorry, pard,—I'm sorry!"

"Thanks!" muttered Fisher, huskily.

After several moments the sheriff once more spoke. "Gawd, man, why did you do it?" and there was real sorrow in his voice. He, also, felt greatly drawn toward the other.

"I tol' yu 'afore, Evans, an' it's the truth! I swear he drawed on me first, an' *shot* at me first;—only he happened tu miss an' I happened tu be mighty quick after that!"

"I—I believe yu, pard!" said the sheriff. "But yu know how it is. No one seed the thing; they proved that both o' yu was enemies, an' the las' word 'Red' said, when they found him kickin' his las', was that yu'd killed him! Well, yu know how frequent killin's hev bin lately; an' we all had our orders tu make an example o' the next man, er somethin' would happen!" He sighed. "I'm right sorry, Fisher, but a man's gotta do his duty!"

The other tried to laugh. "Lord, man, yu shore bin kind tu me, an' yu know I ain't blamin' yu in the least; only I certainly wish I'd had witnesses when I killed that skunk!"

"So do I!" said the sheriff, fervently, and again they relapsed into silence, both riding with heavy hearts.

Presently, as they neared a short incline on the rolling desert, with several large cactus bushes clumped heavily together, another actor appeared upon this silent scene, making a most unexpected entrance.

When they were not more than twenty feet away from the clump of cactus, a man suddenly sprang out from behind it, his face wicked with a nasty smile, and a big forty-five in his right hand.

"Put up yu han's, Evans,—*damn yu!*" he shouted.

The sheriff started back, absolutely surprised; and Fisher pulled in sharply, almost to Evans's side.

"Put 'em up, er I'll drill yu full o' holes!" the voice hissed.

The sheriff was a cautious man. He saw that he was cornered, and he raised his hands slowly above his head. His face went a dead white, and he muttered between dry lips, "Gawd,—it's Buldger!"

The other advanced, laughing harshly. "Well, well, I got yu, at las', eh? Oh, lemme tell yu, Mister Jim Evans, sheriff, I ain't no fool! I sort o' had a feelin' fer the las' year, ever since I killed that young cub brother o' yourn, that you was some day gonna git me, savvy? I know yu, all right, all right; an' I know yore the kin' of a feller that gits his man—*if his man don't git him!* Ha, ha, ha! But this time, Jimmy, mu frien', yu' *man* got *yu*, what?"

The sheriff did not answer, but his face worked spasmodically for a brief instant; and then it grew quite calm, even though he knew that the other would surely kill him.

"Babe" Fisher eyed the pair silently, feeling a still greater respect and

liking for the sheriff as he saw the way he took his medicine.

"Well, mu frien', Mister Sheriff," continued Bludger, "it shore is a shame tu see sech a nice little boy like yuself go off so young, eh? But it can't be helped, yu know,—it can't be helped! If I didn't git yu, yu'd shore git me, see?" and he again went off into laughter. "Yu see, I found out 'bout yu goin' after Fisher, there, an' I figured that I'd better wait here till yu got back, see? Oh, I tell yu, I ain't no fool!"

The sheriff's lips moved, and he spoke evenly. "Go right ahead, Bludger, yu got me! Yu—yu hound, tu kill a young, helpless lad, without no provocation!" He stopped, knowing that he would go off in a tirade of anger if he thought longer of his brother, which he was sure was exactly what the other wanted him to do.

"Well, Jimmy," sneered the man with the gun, "I'm gonna be nice an' gentle! I'm gonna count up tu ten, —slow-like,—an' when I git there, look out, fer I expec' tu fill yu full o' lead, see?"

The sheriff straightened up in his saddle, preparing to meet death without flinching; while "Babe" Fisher, by his side, suddenly jutted out his chin, his eyes sparkling, and eyed the sheriff's enemy searchingly.

"One—two—three—four! Goes kinda slow, eh?" said Bludger, bringing out the numbers draggingly.

The sheriff scorned to answer.

"Five—six—seven—eight! Gettin' purty close, now, Jim Evans! Better pray!" admonished the other tauntingly. "How's it feel tu be two numbers from death, eh?" and he laughed loudly at what he considered an excellent joke.

Still the sheriff remained silent. His prisoner was so rigid that his whole body was twitching nervously.

The mocking voice continued. "N—i—n—e!" he spelt the word slowly, and his hand with the gun, now, was almost on a level with the sheriff's head. "Here she goes, Jimmy, git ready! T—e—"

But at that moment something happened. "Babe" Fisher, handcuffed, ignored by Bludger, suddenly jabbed his horse in the ribs with all his might and shouted lustily, urging the animal forward in a wild, desperate bound, directly in front of the sheriff.

Then the action was quick! Bludger gasped for a fraction of a second, utterly astounded; and then he rapidly leveled his gun at the sheriff and pulled the trigger.

But before he could shoot again another report followed, this time from the sheriff's gun, and Bludger, with a moan, toppled from his horse, a bullet through his heart. His own lead had gone wild, for he had lost his head completely at Fisher's action.

After a moment the sheriff burst out, "What in the all-fired Kingdom o' Hades did yu do that for, eh?" His voice was gruff, but his eyes were dimmed and he gazed at his prisoner as a man gazes at another one that he loves.

"Babe" Fisher turned his head. "Oh, I don't know! I reckon *I* was as good as gone, anyway; an' that I'd better give yu the chance to draw yu gun! Yu—yu bin white tu

me, Evans, an' I couldn' see yu die from that hound's lead!"

The sheriff sat shaking his head, his heart too full to speak his gratitude. But after several moments he crossed to his prisoner's side, took a bunch of keys from his pocket, unlocked the manacles that held the other's wrists together, and slipped the tools of his office silently back into the pocket they had come from.

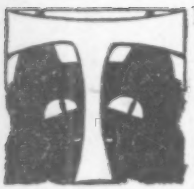
"Babe" Fisher looked at him wonderingly. "What—what—" he stammered.

The sheriff gripped him by the shoulder. "Look here, pard," he said, his voice husky, "a man that does a thing like that is a *man*, an' I don't see him swing fer killin' a brute like 'Red' Ginnis,—not much! Why, if yu'd let Bludger settle me yu could 'a' bin free again! Listen, yu see that there man on the ground? Well, that there feller's 'Babe' Fisher, an' yo're,—yo're John Smith, er Henry Jones, er anything yu like! Come on, pard, I reckon we'd better be ridin' along, ain't got much water, yu know!" and the sheriff smiled happily and clapped his former prisoner affectionately on the back.

But "Babe" Fisher,—or Smith, or Jones, or whatever he finally decided upon,— would not go on until he had wrung the sheriff's hand so that it ached for a good ten minutes after.

The Little Grey Car

BY HELEN VAN VALKENBURGH



THERE could be no doubt about it, the little grey car was hoodooed! The Hoodoo was impishly irresponsible, and on him be the blame. Billy's acquaintance with the car had been an acquaintance with the vagaries infinite of sick carborators, obstinate spark-plugs, cranks that wouldn't crank, and gasoline out of all proportion to the distance covered.

To begin with they were in the car. *They* were Polly Fitch and Billy afore-mentioned, and they were discussing the cheerful business of matrimony. Polly was weeping, which proves just how cheerful it is. Billy attempted to comfort her, but the car interfered—perhaps she was jealous—so Polly wept on, unchecked. When her sobs allowed, she spoke, and she managed to express her mind pretty clearly.

"I tell you, Billy, we're never, never, going to be married at all! It's the limit!" Here Billy managed to offer his handkerchief, and she mopped her eyes. "Beastly old initials you've got!" she exclaimed. "They scratch!"

"You made 'em." Then after a pause, "Why this never-never business?" he queried.

"Because I'm an only child," the girl groaned.

"Don't get the connection." He was frankly puzzled, and his bewilderment showed plainly in his blue eyes, which were suddenly serious.

"You see," the girl explained wearily, "we've got to postpone our wedding again."

"But that's not fair," Billy cried out abruptly. "You've done that twice, already, and I'm sick of waiting, Polly."

"My dear boy, I haven't. I'm not doing it this time. It's mother!" She swallowed a sob, and her grey eyes flashed. "She doesn't intend to lose her only child! Every time the prospect looms large, she has a nervous collapse and goes to bed. She's done it today for the seventh time!"

"Well," Billy said slowly, "we can elope."

"Elope! And not have a real wedding? Oh, Billy!"

"Are you marrying me for the sake of the wedding?"

"No—but—weddings are nice," she smiled through her tears.

"We'll elope today, and have it over," he went on. "I'm plain sick of waiting, dear."

"And have me committing matricide!" she half smiled. "Not much, Billy! And besides, what is life without a wedding dress!" But her attempt at flippancy ended with a sob.

"We'll buy one afterward," Billy explained, "and you can be photographed in it. That's all they're good for, anyway." But she did not smile.

"Oh, Billy, Billy," she cried instead, "I'm so tired of it all—and yet I

think it would be quite wrong to elope; and so do you."

"I'm not so sure I do," he returned, "and there's nothing easier. We'll stop in town and be married this afternoon."

When the little grey car heard this she balked; possibly because her conscience shied at becoming an accessory to an elopement. Billy got out, leaving Polly to consider the matter. He bumped his head while fussing with the spark, and murmured sweet anathemas. Polly paid no attention, but the car heard. These were the terms of endearment upon which she throve, and the regular chug-chug of her engine rewarded him.

He climbed back beside the girl and looked long at her resolute profile. "You won't elope?" he asked finally.

"No! And I don't want to go near town, either, Billy Hewett; so you may turn here and make for the hills. No temptation for mine!"

"Pretty way to put it."

"Well, you know you can be awfully convincing—sometimes," she smiled.

Having her own way pleased the little car, and she purred along, peacefully. But she did not reckon with the Hoodoo. He was on the alert. He had a long score to settle, but the moment to assert his power had not come.

The end of the afternoon found them far from the lake where Polly lived, and the hills still called. Finally they turned back. They stopped at an inn for supper and Billy filled the gasoline tank by way of precaution. They they started home. Thirty miles of real country stretched between, and the moon, rising over a sweep of the opposite ridge, laid its witchery upon them. The question of eloping had been dropped, and they traveled mile after mile in contented silence. Suddenly a sharp hissing noise greeted them. It was unmistakable. Polly sighed and Billy sprang to the ground.

"Blow-out?" she asked, leaning over the side. He nodded.

"We'll get her in shape pretty quick." The Hoodoo smiled sardonically at Billy's assurance. "Pile out, Polly, and hold the wheel." She obeyed. "These are lightning detachables, see?"

He dug out his tools while he talked, and was soon prying away at the rim, which loosened quite easily. Then he tackled the tire, while Polly held the wheel steady. It was cemented fast with the mud of many months and all Billy's efforts were vain.

"Guess I'll have to kick it off," he said, puffing. "Hold her tight, Polly." He lay flat on his back and kicked, and the Hoodoo laughed gleefully at his ignominy. "Lucky for us it's moonlight," Billy remarked between paroxysms.

"Has she budged?"

"Nope." He kicked again.

"Let me pry her off with this." She picked up his file. "I'm sure I can." It broke in her hands as she spoke. So an hour passed. Not a car came by and the tire still stuck. This was the Hoodoo enjoying himself.

Finally, about ten o'clock, the tire slipped over the rim. Kicking had done it; kicking aimed at the spot marked "Lightning detachable."

Billy had kept good-natured, and Polly had been game. They inserted the new tube and struggled again—heroically, this time, for it was very late, and ominous, little black clouds were creeping up from behind the hills, where thunder rumbled fitfully. At last the tire was back, the rim in place, and Billy, puffing at the pump, had forced enough air in to make progress possible. They jumped to the seat, and were again on their way.

"Where are we now?" Polly asked.

"'Bout fifteen miles from that little village we passed," he said. "We can telephone your mother when we make it."

"That would be—" a second hiss interrupted her; the Hoodoo had not finished his antics.

"It's another blow-out," Billy groaned, "and we've used the only extra."

"What'll we do?" Polly was alarmed.

"Have to run her like this," he remarked, mentaliy reckoning the cost of damages. "Can't go very fast." He felt depressed.

The Hoodoo, hearing, was angry. He had counted on stopping them entirely. Well, he would! Powerless against the dominion of magic, the little grey car sighed and stood still.

"Heavens, Billy! What's wrong now!" As Polly spoke, a huge black cloud put out the moon. "It's going to storm," she gasped. "Do make her go again!"

Billy jumped to his feet, casting a worried glance at the sky. "You're right," encouragingly. Then, after a pause spent in puttering about, "By heck, Polly, we're out of gas! The tank's sprung a leak! This car's the limit," he continued, as he came back to her. "There's nothing she can't do, but this is the worst yet!"

"How about us?" Polly was troubled.

"We might walk to the town." A crash emphasized the delights of his suggestion.

"I'm afraid of storms," Polly whispered miserably. "We'll just have to stick here." She trembled, and Billy patted her on the back, man fashion.

"Buck up!" he enjoined brightly; "it might be a lot worse." The lightning was dividing the clouds in grim earnest, and the thunder rumbled angrily.

"I don't like it," Polly gasped. "I —I just know we're going to get struck."

"Feel as guilty as all that, do you?" he laughed. "Didn't know your record was so big, dear. Better 'fess up before it's too late!"

"You needn't joke! I'm afraid." She sprang to her feet and began tugging at the hood. A big, warm drop splashed on her nose, and she clapped her hands to her ears to shut out the sound of the thunder.

"Let me do that," Billy commanded, dragging at the cover which stuck stubbornly. The Hoodoo was doing his best to prolong his triumph. The rain increased and the girl dropped in a forlorn heap on the bottom of the car, bundling the robe about her ears. Perhaps this caused the Hoodoo to relent; at any rate, the hood came up with a jerk which sent Billy half across the road.

"Heavens, Polly," he said, as he made fast the rubber curtain, "it's not the end of the world."

"How do you know?" came a muffled rejoinder.

"Well, if it is, let's be game about it," he insisted, as he got in, and drew her up beside him. "See what a pretty storm it is, anyway."

"I—I hate it." She buried her face in his shoulder, and shook convulsively. Polly was not having a good time.

The rain beat against the hood and the wind flapped the curtains, drowning his reply. The lightning flashed incessantly; the thunder rattled and crashed and banged, and Polly shivered in Billy's arms. It was a long storm; but even storms end, and at last it marched off behind the hills, and the moon reappeared, now near the western sky line. Polly drew a tremendous sigh of relief, and fell asleep. Billy laid her down on the seat, and covered her tenderly with the robe; glad she was to have a little rest. It was three o'clock, and they could do nothing until morning. He wondered what those at home were thinking; he could imagine, and the picture made him both laugh and frown.

The Hoodoo was happy! Revenge is sweet, and he had bowed to Billy's will the larger half of the summer. This was his first real walk away; but even Hoodoos have their Waterloo, and this one was outwitted at exactly half past six by a cheerful red roadster. Billy heard the song of its engine before it rounded the hill; so did the Hoodoo, whose heart sank with chagrin, while Billy's raced with thanksgiving. Heaven was not entirely merciless! The thought of the tramp to the village through the sticky, oozy mud had been bothering him. The newcomer drew up and asked particulars. Billy explained. The Hoodoo listened in angry silence.

"I'll take you along," the man offered. Billy wakened Polly, while the Hoodoo beat his head furiously against the stone wall of circumstance.

The bewildered girl stumbled out of the car. For a moment she could not remember how she had come there; then it flashed over her, and she looked gratefully at the stranger. "Are you going to take us home?" she asked.

"To the village," Billy explained, while the other helped her to the seat beside him, smiling at her many protestations of delight. Then with Billy firmly seated on the mud-guard, they left the little grey car to the mercies of the Hoodoo and splashed through numerous puddles to the village, which had become transformed into a haven of hope—hope in the disguise of breakfast, a telephone, and a mechanician. Their deliverer set them down at the door of the only hotel and listened with smiling eyes to their anthem of thanks. Then the red roadster ran out of their lives.

Telephone connections proved their families to be worried beyond their wildest imaginings, and the length of their remarks—costly by long distance—caused the culprits to reverse the charges. After a breakfast, the wonders of which still linger in their memories, they found a most willing blacksmith who reckoned he could

mend tires. Also they rented the one car the town had for hire, and with man, tools, gasoline—and Polly, Billy returned to the sight of the Hoodoo's despotism.

"Polly," Billy said—the blacksmith was out of earshot—"let's elope this morning."

"Why, Billy I—" he was watching the comprehension of their plight dawn in her face, "I meant to, anyway."

"Then why didn't you say so yesterday and save trouble?"

"Because," Polly explained, wisely. Then after a pause: "Really, though, mother will have fits."

"Exercise," remarked Billy, "is good for the nerves."

Then they came to the little grey car. They allowed the blacksmith to do all the work, and they watched him with joy—unholy joy—as he kicked off another of those marvelous tires. The Hoodoo still rebelled, but his strength was nearly spent. As to the car, she longed for the comforts of her garage; a night in the wet had chastened her spirit. Seeing the blacksmith was equal to the occasion, Polly and Billy walked down the road to discuss their elopement. What they said was just what you would expect, and since neither the Hoodoo nor the little grey car heard, they could not interfere. If they had, it is safe to say that this story might never have been finished. Ultimately the blacksmith called them back from Arcady where Polly had picked a bridal bouquet of great white daisies in spite of Billy's numerous interruptions.

So they sped back over the road they had traveled twice that morning, and on to the city. They were quiet, dreaming of the future, while the car dreamed of the joys of water and grease, and the unsuspecting Hoodoo dreamed greatly of a mighty *coup de tete* to take place presently. In the city they were married. Polly dropped the right number of tears and Billy felt the proper twinge of pride, and the service was the usual one. After all, an elopement is rather like a conventional wedding. On the way home Polly was very quiet for Polly. Being married is serious, but eloping is more so, because you have to break the news.

"I—I'm really afraid," was all she said. Then they turned in at the gate.

As they stopped the little grey car, Mrs. Fitch walked weakly toward them; she was white and shaken by her anxious night. "I'm glad you've brought her safely back, Billy," she said gravely. "It was a pretty serious thing to have happen."

"Mrs. Fitch—" Billy began, then paused. It really takes courage to proclaim an unsuspecting lady, *Mother-in-law*.

"Well, have you done any more dreadful things?" She sank into a chair, and at the sight of her real weakness, Polly shuddered.

"I—I—" the girl stammered, "it's the car's fault, Mother, and—but—oh, we're married, that's all!"

"All!" the other fell back faintly and Polly rushed to her.

"Yes," she explained. "You mustn't mind. We thought—"

"So it was all trumpery about the breakdown!"

"It was not," Polly explained indignantly. "If you don't believe us, look at the tires. Anyway, we're married at last and I'm glad!" She glanced proudly at her left hand.

"My only child has deceived me!" Mrs. Fitch groaned.

At the fatal words Polly spoke her mind. "I'm not your only child any more, thank heaven," she cried! "You have a son!"

"You said the little grey car made the trouble?" severely.

"Ye-es," they stuttered.

"Blessings upon her!" Mrs. Fitch cried unexpectedly, and they listened amazed. "I should never have been able to give you up, Polly." She laid her hand on the girl's arm for a moment, and her eyes were full of tears. "Oh, I'm glad it was taken out of my power—glad, for I wanted you to marry Billy, but, well, you *were* my only child!" Polly kissed her, and Mrs. Fitch drew a deep breath of relief. "I haven't felt so well since you two children became engaged."

The little grey car heard, and was proud; she had been an accessory to an elopement, after all. As for the Hoodoo, when he discovered he had helped Billy to his happiness, he flew into such a rage that he "bust himself" like the chameleon who ventured on the Scotch plaidy, and tried to turn every color at once.

Flirting with Fate

BY LAURA REID MONTGOMERY

FATE evidently had a finger in this affair, else why did the glove thrown from the purple limousine fall directly at his feet. But it was the hitherto dormant spirit of adventure that caused Charles, a prim-faced, thoughtful young economist to snatch up the trifle, excitedly break into a gallop, and pursue the motor. Fate could not be blamed for that.

The long white glove crumpled in his hand must have exhaled some magic with its scented daintiness, for Charles completely forgot his absorbing calculation anent the interest he would receive on the bond he intended to purchase after cashing his next salary cheque. To be sure, his fiancèe had hinted that an engagement ring would not be refused should he urge her acceptance of one, but he had remarked with a meagre smile that such extravagances were for short-sighted spendthrifts. He intended to save and accumulate and, with prudence, they might some day own a cottage and keep a horse.

"Horse!" wailed Dulcie, "no one wears—I mean uses horses now. I hate a horse!"

"We must be conservative and saving. Motors lead to extravagance," droned Charles with an honest belief in himself, as he gallantly tendered her a ten-cent bag of gum-drops frugally purchased before going to dine at Dulcie's home. His large, placid face wore a bovine expression of surprise as his wife-to-be had explained:

"I like you, Charles, but you are too prudent. I can not fling your ring back to you, à la fiction style, as you omitted giving me one, but here is our engagement 'word.'"

Here, it is regretted, she snapped a very pretty finger at him and rushed from the room, banging the door so rudely that he, with difficulty, stifled an angry word. After leaving the gum-drops on the table, he went to a restaurant, where he ate his dinner and also paid for it. Then, his annoyance somewhat abated, he strolled down the garishly lighted street reflecting fatuously upon his bond.

Romance clutched him.

The taxi turned up an alley with Charles in pursuit. It drew up grandly at the stage door of the La Salle Theatre. Charles, trying to suppress his unseemly panting, stepped up to the machine with the glove. A tiny old woman wearing a shabby green bonnet hopped out; the chauffeur hurried out of his seat; and together they assisted a willowy figure to alight. The girl allowed her glance to drop regally upon Charles and a slow fascinting smile irradiated her charming face, but the old lady, with a sharp word to the chauffeur, hustled her across the grimy cobblestones and into the dim doorway.

Charles followed pantingly.

"Nothing doing, Percival. Keep out! This means you!" The stout doorkeeper grinned knowingly as he barred the way.

"Who is that lady?" panted Charles.

"Mrs. Pansy Tootell."

"Mrs. Tootell!" echoed Charles dazedly. "Why—er—a—does she come here?"

The doorkeeper surveyed Charles's fair hair brushed back over his head as befits one who thinks deeply and permitted himself a rude guffaw.

"She comes here to guard the angelic Miss Gladys. The 'nuts' are always on her trail."

Charles began to cut an eye-tooth. He painfully extracted a quarter from his pocket-book and parted with it.

"Is that girl's name Miss Gladys?" he wanted to know, fanning himself with his hat, which he had removed at sight of the smile.

"You're on. Her monica's Gladys de Clare."

He rang the quarter on a dry-goods box and Charles eyed it.

"I wish to see her," he decided suddenly. "I have something of hers I should like to return."

"Old stuff! Hire a hall!" gibed the man, growing bored. "Run along and you'll be in time to see her dance —if you have a dollar," he added dubiously.

A group of chorus girls pushed past Charles and he replaced his hat. Crushing the glove up lest anyone should see it, he picked his way out of the dusky alley he had sprinted into so merrily.

Entering the theatre, he studied the framed, motto-like schedule of prices. He sometimes treated Dulcie to a theatre trip and occasionally blew himself to front-row balcony seats.

Tonight, with the mysterious perfume of the glove beclouding his prosaic mind, he bought a lower stage box-seat, hoping to get the seat nearest the stage, but the boxes in that theatre being raised he, instead of being on a level with the performers as he had hoped, was above them. He obtained the front seat and seated himself on the gilt chair with what he hoped was a nonchalant air. A man behind him in the box told his bald-headed companion that he liked the girly-girly shows and that Gladys was the queen peach, all righty, but no one seemed to be able to meet her. There were whispers of a stern lover, but nothing much was known except that she was a mystery.

Charles felt for the gloves and lost himself in a golden reverie. Such a face! And to single him out! It could not have been chance that he had the glove. If she had dropped it it would have landed in the mud although, to be sure, he was very near as the crowd waited to cross the street. Perhaps she did not throw it at him at all! Perspiration dotted his countenance and he stiffened as this idea rambled through his mind. Then he breathed again. That *smile* was meant for him. The glove seemed to snuggle up demurely in his hand and he shook his fair hair back with a "sly dog am I" gesture.

Then the lights dimmed, the orchestra swung into a glorious lilting melody and as the velvet curtains

soared heavenwards Charles saw nothing but Gladys.

Frocked in billowy white she twirled and swayed, ethereal as an ice fairy, alluring as Circe! There was no speck of colour about her save her upcurled scarlet lips and her clouds of tawny hair which, bronze in the shadows, rippled into reddish gold when the spotlight played upon them. At first she danced with her eyes closed, her long dark lashes sweeping the pearly whiteness of her cheeks, but as the music quickened, her gauze wings unfolded and, opening her leaf-brown eyes, she gazed straight up, meeting Charles's enraptured stare. A long, mysterious, haunting question was gravely flashed up; then the lights were dimmed and Charles was frantically studying his programme to see if she appeared again,and was pleased to see that she did.

"Say, do you know Gladys?" The man from the next box tapped Charles familiarly on the shoulder. "Will you introduce me?" he continued, offering his cigar case. "I saw the glad eye she gave you," he added waggishly, but Charles, with a prudish glance at the man who had confessed to liking girly-girly shows, stalked past and down the short flight of stairs from the box. Once out he tore around to the stage door just in time to see the purple limousine disappearing.

Next day he passed as one in a dream. A rosy-haze enveloped the prosaic figures of his fellow clerks at the office, and when Mr. Prendergast, his beetle-browed employer, asked him what kind of a ledger would be required for the petty cash, he murmured reminiscently: "White kid." After this blunder was rectified, he withdrew from his chief's presence and knuckled down to work in earnest, but if Fate was curious concerning the results of her fingering she could have seen Charles stolidly waiting at the stage door long before the evening performance.

Same hustling of beauty, another appealing smile, but Charles had a plan. He stepped into the limousine while the chauffeur was escorting Miss Gladys to her dressing-room and when he returned Charles struck a bargain with him.

For a monetary consideration Dan, the chauffeur, would arrange to let Charles wait in the car after the show, and after putting Gladys inside he would detain the vigilant Mrs. Tootell so that Charles could drive Gladys home, while Mrs. Tootell would be told there was a new driver.

After the performance, Charles sat in the driver's seat, while the old lady and Dan assisted Gladys into the car. According to schedule, Dan called Mrs. Tootell back to get a letter the door-man had for her and Charles started the car out through the dim alley. Palpitatingly, he wound in and out and over to Michigan Boulevard, then south. So far, not a word had been spoken. He wondered if Gladys had not noticed the absence of her chaperone. He slowed up and cleared his throat. Somehow, the adventure seemed to assume a different aspect. Suppose she should be frightened and scream

for help when she discovered he was not Dan. He leaned back:

"Miss De Clare?"

No answer.

Icicles were fox-trotting up and down his backbone.

"Miss Gladys, don't be frightened, but I was so anxious to return your glove that I—"

A ripple of laughter cut short his floundering speech and his heart began to beat again. He drew the car up to the curb and stopped.

"Thanks," cooed a rich contralto voice and the queenly Gladys actually stepped out and climbed into the seat beside him.

"Isn't this a lark? Poor old Tootell will be frantic."

"Did you know I was not Dan?" gurgled Charles.

"Yes, indeed, I knew your back perfectly. I've seen you often, but I simply had to spoil a perfectly good pair of gloves to attract your attention. Tootell scolded me for my carelessness in losing one so you must return it."

Charles listened to the musical voice in a trance of delight, but when he tried to speak, he found his usually ready tongue was twisted. He smelled the same entrancing perfume that scented the glove, and as though surprised by his silence, she leaned over with the charming impulsiveness of a child and peered into his face.

"You are even blonder than I thought," she stated at last, her grave brown eyes brilliant with excitement. And quite beside himself he stretched out his arm and encircling her waist gathered her to him and kissed her.

Silence prevailed and Charles felt that at last he really lived, for his enchanted princess not only permitted his kisses but generously returned them.

He felt a pang of remorse as Dulcie momentarily flashed into his beatific dream, then he dismissed her summarily. She had refused him and slighted his offerings. He flushed as he remembered the bag of gumdrops; he must make some offering to his radiant scented mystery who had loved him at sight.

"I ought to get you a new glove for this one," he murmured ardently, "for I shall cherish this one in memory of our meeting."

"You may," she conceded. "I usually buy them by the dozen pairs; it saves time. Use that glove to match the pearl tint—I don't use the dead white."

He blenched as he thought of the probable cost of twenty-button swede gloves by the dozen, but she was staring out:

"Is that Mrs. Tootell?" she queried, and while he reassured her, he decided that he would send the gloves as directed. The bond could wait until next month.

"Suppose while Mrs. Tootell is hunting for me, we go to supper," she murmured.

Her manner was that of an empress conferring a title and Charles was deeply impressed, and highly elated.

When he heard the buzz occasioned by their arrival at the restaurant in the Rialto where she had directed him, he felt that life was indeed good.

Glances of wonder mingled with amusement and envy met him from every table. The head waiter conducted Gladys to the choicest table with deferential bows and with his own hands placed a vase of long-stemmed roses beside her. Her queer red-bronze hair formed a fluffy setting for her dead-white face. Charles was surprised at the quantity of champagne she consumed, but of course the artistic temperament had to be stimulated.

An acquaintance of Charles's sat at a nearby table and catching his eye, beckoned him over.

Charles rose reluctantly. She raised her eyebrows.

"I'll be right back," he promised.

She leaned back disdainfully.

"Oh, please yourself, but do not present anyone to me. I will not permit it."

Her eyes flashed and Charles quaked, but as his friend had started toward him, smiling broadly, he felt it was wiser to go and head him off. Dulcie had never been so changeable—all over—fire one moment—cold rage the next.

"Can't you see I'm occupied?" he snarled, as Dickie Brown approached him.

"Yes," responded Dickie, "but you can not afford to be seen with that—"

"Stop right there," thundered Charles raising his voice above the strains of "I'll raise An Army Of My own." "She is a very dear friend." Dickie stared, then howled with glee. "You'll be the laughing stock of Chicago, Chass, that Gladys is—"

"I know perfectly well who she is," said the intrepid Chass, and turned on his heel in true cavalier fashion.

Dickie, grinning, removed his obnoxious presence and Chass rejoined his queen.

"I'm tired of this," she informed him, but at this moment a tiny old woman in a familiar green bonnet entered the room and Gladys dropped her empress-pose and hurried out tremblingly to meet her.

"Stay there and don't let her see you," she whispered rapidly.

"May I drive you home to-morrow night?" he begged.

"I'm afraid not; I'll pay dearly for this," she quavered and flittered away.

The supper check changed him from the gay dog Chass to Charles again. But he felt that it was worth a week's salary to have entertained this royal maid.

She had admired a jewelled bracelet worn by Lottie Lee, a soubrette, and he had noticed that she wore no ornaments. She had waited for the coming of her twin-soul and he rejoiced that it was so. He would outwit that green-bonneted dragon and win her.

Next day, when buying the gloves, he had a wonderful inspiration. Perhaps she had conveyed the idea to him in her artless way. Who knew! The idea, however, was this! The old dragon had been annoyed by the loss of the glove, now he was sending a dozen pairs and in the box he would enclose a duplicate of the bracelet Gladys had so childishly admired. Thus the dragon might be placated and, in any case, Gladys would be pleased.

He spent his noon-hour shopping and his bank account was lavishly drawn upon. After all, we love those most whom we serve, and Chass felt a glow of pleasure as his offerings were dispatched by a messenger. He returned to his desk.

His bracelet flashed upon her arm that night and Chass was foolishly happy. How pure and fairy-like she was. One twin-soul is always waiting if one is only persistent enough to search and refuses to be satisfied by any meretricious substitute. He strode around to the alley. He no longer experienced the sensations of a drab, colourless economical existence. He was master of his fate —a clear-cut man of the world, able to earn, and glad to spend it royally.

Fate was getting bored and so she again fingered the situation.

Dulcie was sitting in her little pink-and-white room studying a recent photograph of her Charles.

"He's so lovable and handsome," she wept, "but *so* aggravatingly prudent."

Chass, at the moment, was prudently losing himself in a crowd of chorus people coming out and by judicious scrooching and ducking, had whizzed in through the enchanted door while the stout doorkeeper had momentarily turned his head.

Chass stumbled up a short flight of stairs and saw the hated green bonnet at the other end of the corridor and, turning to escape, saw a door with a star painted upon it. This was probably her room. He halted and heard a domineering male voice. His heart creaked joyously. Forgetting his excellent upbringing, he opened the door a trifle. The first thing he saw was one of the fluffy tulle skirts *she* wore. The room was full of cigar smoke and he increased the crack with an omnious frown on his broad forehead.

Lolling on a trunk was a swarthy, keen-faced man, smoking. Before the dressing-table stood Gladys. She was dressed for her act in her crisp ballet skirt. Her back was turned toward the door, but on her well-whitened arm Chass saw his bracelet gleaming; then his gaze travelled upward and a twinge of disillusionment deepened his already disapproving attitude at Gladys's unconventionality in allowing this skinny intruder to lounge unrebuked in her dressing room.

Gladys's head looked different. In fact, it seemed nude, and small wonder, for the glossy curls of bronze were topping a glass pitcher and her head was sleek and black. But Chass did not pause to regret her hair for she was speaking and her words were unexpected:

"Ye-e-s, I guess he's spent all he had to spare on little me. Some sparkler, not?" She held her arm up to let the light show the gems to better advantage.

The skinny man yawned, and his tone was purely commercial as he replied:

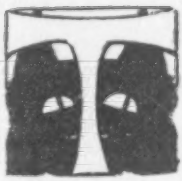
"Yes, we'll have your picture flashed to-night when you're at supper and then chuck him with a merry laugh. It will be a good advertisement for deah young Gladys—Gladys of the purple limousine. Nothing like a good press-agent, what?"

Charles eavesdropped savagely. He had been a pretty boob to puff this abandoned woman. He gazed miserably at his short-haired charmer, when she turned a trifle and he saw—he had thought she was applying make-up—that she held in her hand a safety razor, which she continued to use vigorously.

He had helped advertise the great female impersonator—Thomas Maynell.

Kinstry's Wireless Message

BY RANDLE DEAN



THE dark cluster of wires by the snowy eaves of the Telegraph Building hummed in a mournful key. In the green-lamped twilight of the receiving room where men in shirt sleeves sat before the telegraph instruments, the crooning changed to a noisy, clicking symphony. Through the long night these men listened and wrote, unmindful of the cruel incongruities of the messages they transcribed.

In the office, one floor below, John Kinstry, the night manager, leaned back in his squeaky swivel-chair and yawned tremendously at the smutty ceiling. Taking off the green shade over his eyes, he rubbed his face and glanced at the clock. Only 10:30! Barr, the night city editor of a morning paper, would not "pick him up" for their midnight lunch for an hour and a half.

He wondered what the menu at Duvall's would be that night. He hoped that there would be oyster stew—hot and filling oyster stew that gives off a cloud of steam when it is poured in your bowl. And how it warms your throat and makes you comfortable on a frosty night.

Finding an apple in a pigeon-hole of his desk, he munched it ravenously, as he contemplated the work piled high on his desk. He was a little, hungry-looking man, who subsisted nervously on the hasty products of the quick lunch restaurants and then groaned loudly with dyspepsia.

Having finished the apple, Kinstry drew his chair closer to his desk. As he picked up a report, a blast of icy air, that rushed through the opened door, chilled his bald head.

"Shut the door," he shouted, rubbing his head.

"It's shet," answered a mild voice at the counter. He glanced up and saw a meek, gray-haired woman peering timidly at him.

"Is this the place where you send telygrams?" she inquired.

"Well," he answered, "it might be an 'Eyetalian' fruit-stand, or a 'boodwor,' or a railroad station, or a morgue, but it—"

"Hey?" The old woman thrust her wrinkled face, with trembling hand to her ear, through the aperture.

"Aw, nothing," he said. "Write out your telegram over there."

She followed the trail of his pointing finger and stood bewildered before the writing-desk. Kinstry watched her sullenly. With an apologetic smile, the old woman returned to the counter.

"I—I don't know," she faltered. "Will you write it for me?"

"What's your message?" asked Kinstry, rising from his chair with a bored air.

"It's to go to Walter Kempfer. He's a grandson of the poor lady who lives—she's a-dyin' now, though—but she did live at my house. I'm Mrs. Brackin—Ella Brackin."

"Walter Kempfer," wrote Kinstry. He paused to ask: "Where does he live?"

"Hey?"

"Where does he live—this Kempfer?" he shouted, so loudly that the telephone operator paused in her manicuring and looked up.

"Oh, yes—to be sure," answered the old woman, "where does he live?" She smoothed out a crumpled slip of paper and held it close to her faded eyes. "It's Titusville," she announced with an air of small triumph.

"Any street address?"

"Now you come to speak of it, he lives at a boardin' house—Mrs. Feeney's boarding house. Can I get an answer real soon?" she asked anxiously. "She ain't a-goin' to last long—poor body! tossin' there and moanin' like a lost soul."

He looked up "Titusville" in a large, green book.

"About an hour and a half. That is," he added, "if it's urgent and they can find Kempfer."

"Don't you think Feeney's boardin' house put down on the telygram will fetch him?"

"Well, Titusville, ma'am, ain't what might be called a metropolis. There are only three hundred and fifty to look for and—"

"Mrs. Feeney's lived there all her life except two weeks when she was a-visitin' me and Lizzie—Lizzie is Walter's grandma, you know."

Mr. Kingstry showed an elaborate indifference for the Kempfer family tree.

"What's your message?" he asked shortly. He had decided that a little tomato catsup would add flavor to the oyster stew.

"Tell him," she began slowly, "that if he don't forgive her when she, poor soul, is a-dyin' and a-callin' for him, he's as stony-hearted a wretch as ever breathed. Three hundred dollars ain't countin' when you're walkin', though she's in my best bed, pluckin' the sheets with her thin hands, tossin' her head and walkin' in the valley o' the shadder o' death." She paused and wiped her eyes.

"My dear madam," protested Kinstry, "you don't want a telegraph office, it's a book publisher you want."

"Her poor cheeks are thin and pale like she was dead already. And her bright eyes that have a kind of pleadin' look in 'em frightens me like a dream I had onct."

"Can't you tell him in ten words?"

"Walter Kempfer ain't to be put off with ten words."

"Well, suppose you tell me what the 'dope' is." She looked at him blankly. "I mean," his hand waved helplessly, "tell all about it in ten words; more'n ten costs more," he explained.

"She took three hundred dollars. Maybe there wasn't no right to her havin' the money, but she needed it, poor soul, what with rent and clothes and—"

"Whose money was it?"

"Walter's."

Mr. Kinstry thrummed a pencil between his gold-filled teeth.

"His mother," she whispered slowly, "when she died, left it to Walter in Lizzie's care, unbeknownst to him. He was a little feller then. Lizzie, you know, is Walter's grandma— and she spent it all, as I was just sayin', needin' it bad."

"Did Walter find it out?"

"Well, I reckon he did and acted terrible! He cursed her gray hair and he struck that poor, pale woman, struck her down and she fell, breakin' my lamp-shade, which wasn't no matter then or now."

Mr. Kinstry rubbed his bald head slowly. "And now she's askin' *his* forgiveness?"

"The slow dyin'," whispered Mrs. Brackin, with an intent look, "always worry over a sinful act—so small when your dyin'."

Mr. Kinstry cleared his throat. He wrote the telegram and slowly read it to Mrs. Brackin:

"Grandmother dying. Begs forgiveness for taking the money. Answer quick."

She nodded her head. "That's right," she muttered and fumbled at her pocket-book. She left the office only after Kinstry had sworn to telephone the answer as soon as it arrived.

"Call Courtland 2963—that's my boardin' house."

When the door had slammed, he returned to his desk.

"Send this quick," he told the clattering, bustling room up-stairs, "and let me have the answer soon as it's in."

The minute-hand of the clock dropped to 11:30. Kingstry tossed aside his papers and telephoned the receiving room.

"Any answer to Titusville wire?"

"Not yet, but say! we've got five wires down and out on account of the snow."

"Oh, hell," was Mr. Kinstry's answer, through the speaking tube. The telephone bell rag furiously as he turned away. He recognized the voice.

"Not yet, I'm sorry to say, but a little more time—bad snow, you know." He spoke almost gently.

"What's that?" He repeated her words. "Live about an hour? I'm sorry."

Kinstry did no work for the next half hour. He stared at the ceiling, a cigar smoldering between his lips. It was not over the wire trouble that he worried, except as it might delay the message to the dying woman.

The door swung wide at the impetuous entrance of Charlie Barr.

"Hello there!" shouted Barr, "on time as usual. Ain't the storm fierce? What my father used to call a 'rip-snorter'." He slapped his broad shoulders and the snow showered. "Well, you ready?" He paused, looking at Kinstry. "What's the matter with you—sick? Duvall's isn't so good when you're sick, but Lord, when you're well and hungry and cold—beefsteak smothered in onions and oyster stew—hot oyster stew with real oysters floating on top!"

Kingstry smiled warily with the caution of a dyspeptic.

"I'm waiting for a telephone call," he explained.

"Well, let 'em call you at Duvall's."

The manager shook his head. "Can't. It's a different kind of a call. Anything doing tonight?"

"No, not much. A 'hold-up' over on the East Side. They got three hundred dollars from a Baptist preacher going home from a church festival. Another raid on Monte Rossinger's gambling joint—twenty odd men trying to get genuine, respectable aliases. A prominent merchant, old Kirby, found to be a bigamist. He's got a wife here and another in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Good Lord, ain't one enough? That's about all—oh, yes! Had a wreck out East here, about fifty miles."

"Fifty miles?" muttered Kinstry, looking up.

"Yes. Near a water tank—six houses and one store—kind of town that's called on the map—Titusville."

"Titusville?"

"Why not? It might as well be Titusville as Helmsburg or Juniper. You jumped as if you had relatives there, or, maybe, an extra wife in Titusville."

Kinstry shook his head solemnly. "Much of a wreck?" he asked, glancing at the clock. The minute-hand was dropping again.

"Two men killed and the second vice-president of the road badly shaken up and scared. One of the men used to live here. Criley, our court reporter, used to know him—fellow named Kentler, or something like that."

"Kentler?" repeated Kinstry. "Maybe you mean Kempfer."

"Maybe I do. Well, anyway—Kempfer—that's it. Walter Kempfer. Did you know him?"

Kinstry shook his head.

"Criley says he played first base on—"

"Say, when did this wreck occur?" interrupted Kinstry.

"Oh, about," Barr looked at the clock, "about an hour ago."

"Kingstry's eyes narrowed. "I'll be back in a second—that telephone call."

Barr rolled a cigarette. "Don't let the stew get cold."

Kinstry shut the door of the telephone-booth very carefully. He paused a moment before taking down the receiver.

"Give me Courtland—wait a minute—Courtland 2963."

"This is the telegraph office," he said huskily, when Mrs. Brackin answered, "is she still alive?"

"What's that? Well, can she understand? Yes, I've got a message. He held out his right hand, gazing grimly at the empty palm. It was not often that he lied.

"It says," he told her in a slow, distinctive voice, "'Of course I forgive you. I did long ago. Don't be surprised if you see me very soon. Signed, Walter,'"

He replaced the receiver deliberately and swung himself out of the booth.

"All aboard for the oyster stew, Charlie, and I'll take a little catsup with mine."

Nerve

BY N. K. BUCK

HA' d' you mean, nerve?" said Shorty Long, the powder man. "Him with nerve? Nothin' to it. Just naturally couldn't have much nerve—him just out of college. It takes more experience than a kid like him has got to work up much nerve. Take Black Tom there, the nerviest man in these hills. How did he get his nerve do you suppose? Out of books? Nix. He just naturally made it by being in a thousand tight places in his time and pullin' out of every one with a little mite more experience and nerve than he had before. Course the kid is all right—nothin' against him, but it just ain't natural for a kid just out of knee pants to have a man's size supply of nerve."

Just then the "kid," a young mining engineer, came into the swing room. In looking at him you might easily give him the same rating as was given him by Shorty Long. Then again, you might differ with that authority. Young he was; slight he was; light-haired and blue-eyed, with a pleasant smile. Yet there was something in his eye which might lead you to ask if, after all, there wasn't considerable "stuff" behind there which could be brought out when occasion demanded.

One year out from graduation, with only such experience as he could acquire in that year plus such additional time as he had spent in vacations during his course at the university, the kid certainly looked young—younger by reason of his light complexion, than he really was.

He had for three months been in sole charge of the mine, operating under the supervision of the general manager in control of a group of mines scattered over fifty miles. The work was getting on well, but evidences of insubordination were not lacking. During the last visit of the general manager, this air of unrest among the men had been apparent and had been the subject of consultation between the two men.

"Wellington," said his superior, "this spirit of devilment among the men is something you will have to cure yourself. There is no real help I can give you and mighty little advice that will serve you. These things come now and then to every man in control of men and especially to a young fellow just getting his pace. There's something in the average miner or mucker that calls for a trial of strength—strength of character, not of muscle—with the boss, and they won't be happy until they get it. When the test comes the result will mean success or failure for the boss—especially the young boss. Go to it and handle it your own way."

Wellington walked into the swing room where the men were waiting to go on shift; twenty of them, miners,

muckers and helpers. "Where's Black Tom?" he asked.

"Not here yet. Be here by the time the other boys come up I guess," replied one of the muckers.

Turning to one of the men, Wellington said, "Go tell Tom to come in, please. I want to see him."

The man reappeared a moment later followed by Black Tom.

"Tom," began Wellington, "there's one or two things I want to speak to you about. In the first place, you know the rules—the entire shift are expected to be in the swing room ten minutes before the hour for going to work. It doesn't look very well for you, the shift foreman, to be the only one not on time. In the second place, there's been booze taken down into the mine and you know what that means. Now how about it?"

Black Tom stood a few feet from the engineer during this talk, a half smile, half sneer on his face.

"Well, boss," he began in reply, "as for bein' a trifle late: I take it that rule is meant just to get us all here plenty early and you nor no other man ever knew me not to be on hand when the cage went down. Then for the balance of your kick: do you mean that I've been taking the booze down? If so, I'll just say you can wait till the big boss comes around next trip and you can prefer charges against me if you want to. In the meantime I'll just say I don't like this balling out process before the boys. It don't sound nice. But we'll pass all that and leave it to the big boss."

"We'll not leave it to the big boss, as you call him," returned Wellington. "I'm in charge of this mine and am boss. You'll do one of two things: answer my questions in regard to these things or turn your shift over to Burns."

"You mean to say I'm fired?"

"You are not fired yet. You are given a chance to answer about the booze and will be given one more chance to be in the swing room on time."

"Who said I knew anything about the booze," declared Tom.

"The booze went down during your shift and you knew or should have known it."

"You're dreaming, kid, you're dreaming. No booze ever went into this mine on my shift."

"That's not true," replied Wellington.

"You mean to say I'm a liar?"

"That statement is not true," repeated Wellington.

"Why, you infernal little shrimp," bellowed the enraged foreman, "no man ever called me a liar and got away with it. I'll ring your neck."

He made a spring for the young engineer and would certainly have carried out his threat if he had not been stopped by an automatic revolver in the hands of the engineer.

"Keep back; you've gone far enough." The foreman concluded he meant business and stopped, not however, interrupting a torrent of invectives hurled at the younger man.

"You think you're some guy, don't you—you tow-headed, school-book, would-be engineer? You think because you've got me at the end of that shooting iron I'm afraid of you. I tell you right now, I'll get you for this."

"Tom," replied the engineer, still keeping his voice quiet though there certainly was a tensity about it that was not usual, "you're a good mine foreman—the best in these hills. The big boss, as you call him, doesn't want you fired and it'll be no credit to me if I have to fire you. I want to get along with you and the rest of the boys; but I'm going to be boss. That's why I'm here; that's what I draw my pay for and more than that, that's going to be my life work; it means more to me than just a job or a salary. If I make good it spells success with a capital "S"—if I don't, it means the other thing and I couldn't stand that.

"I know too, what this sort of thing means to you," he went on, "but I've made up my mind about this. Either you or I must back down here and now. This is a ten-shot automatic and I happen to know that it is loaded with one loaded shell and nine empties. I don't know which is the loaded one. I am going to put this gun down on the table between us. You pick it up and use it on me for one shot; that shot will either be the loaded one or one of the empties. I don't know which; you don't know which. If I'm lucky I'll take the next shot at you—maybe loaded, maybe empty. We'll keep that up turn and turn about until one of us reaches the loaded shell. You can take your choice of first shot or second."

With that Wellington quietly laid the gun on the table between them and within reach of both. Twenty pairs of eyes watched the act but no one interfered.

"Come now," resumed Wellington, stepping back a pace from the table, "that's fair enough; it'll be one—two—three; just like that; maybe more, maybe less."

The tension in the room was terrific. The snapping of the logs in the fireplace sounded like dynamite explosions. Tom stood there, his hat far back on his head. Ten seconds—twenty seconds—thirty seconds; he finally wet his lips and spoke, trying to keep his natural tone.

"Do you mean all that, Kid?"

"I mean just that."

Ten seconds — twenty seconds — thirty seconds. Drops of sweat appeared on Black Tom's forehead; yet the room was not warm; in fact, one or two of the men might have been seen to shiver.

"Kid," whispered Tom, "I reckon you're the sure enough big boss. You've got me; when I'm licked I know it."

"That's all right; that's all right. My life work was at stake; your's wasn't. Better take your men and go on shift. The other boys are coming up."

Wellington turned and walked out of the room, leaving the automatic still lying on the table in the center of the room.

"I reckon," said Shorty Long, some time later, "mebbe there's some other sources of supply for nerve besides a whole lot of experience."

And the other men agreed.

Wanted—A Widow

BY ANNIE STEGER WINSTON

THE weight of the world may be on one, and there may still remain a susceptibility to pinpricks.

In the stale afternoon hours of what he had determined should be the last day of his life, Henry K. Boyce could still be annoyed that the "little fool of a girl," sent him by the Business College to fill the place of his absent stenographer, should misspell three words in one letter; and still more annoyed at her crying about it. This last circumstance, to do her justice, she tried hard to conceal by furtive dabs of a handkerchief unobtrusively balled up in a slim, ink-stained hand.

He went on dictating, choosing his words with scrupulous care. He was sensible of no excitement. Dying itself seemed powerless to interest him. Was not that enough of itself to show the imperative necessity of dying?

"His friends can assign no reason"—that, of course, would be said. And then friends and enemies alike would proceed to make the air sibilant with reasons: incurable disease; financial difficulties; domestic troubles; an "entanglement." Certainly, if reasons must needs be such reasons as these, he had no reasons. There was nothing of the sick man about him, though some crank of a nerve specialist, no doubt, would make him personally responsible for the jet blackness of the universe and try to give him medicine for it. He had no financial difficulties—except the difficulty of knowing what to do with a sickening lot of money. No entanglements. One thing, at least, his first and only grand passion had done for him; it had taught him distrust of all women. Domestic troubles assuredly he had none—nor domesticity.

With no human being, irrelevantly it came to him, had he any real tie. He had friends, of course, so-called; business associates, club acquaintances; not one of whom but would be laughing an hour afterward, as if nothing had happened. A cold moisture broke out on his brow. His heart beat curiously light and quick.

Very often now some slight circumstance swelled into sudden disproportionate importance and usurped the business of torture which properly belonged to—everything.

In all the world there would be nobody who would shed a tear—or who might be counted remiss in shedding none; nobody to make any pretense even of mourning.

It was monstrous, horrible, unendurable. It was not enough that "the entire community" should be "shocked"; that "regret" should be "universal." In some way it must be made particular—personal. Somebody to be "left"; somebody to stand as a concrete symbol, if no more, of mourning for him—this all at once had become a necessity.

"I suppose you won't want me any more!" It was the "little fool of a girl," who had got into her shabby jacket and hat now and was ready to go home. Her eyes were still red. How easily women cry! If he could leave a—a widow now—

The "little fool of a girl" was still waiting. What was it that she had been asking?

"Want you? Why—er—"

He was a man of prompt decisions.

"Not perhaps as a stenographer. But—er—if you could possibly see your way to—er—to marrying me—"

"Marry you?" She did not seem able to believe the testimony of her ears. She was too young, of course—ridiculously too young. But so soon she would be free again!

With what patience he might, he waited for her to really take in his question. He could not feel any profound interest in its outcome. Her agitation over it struck him as excessive and unnecessary.

"Don't do it if you'd rather not," he said. "Ask somebody about it—your father or mother—"

"I haven't any father or mother."

"Grandfather, grandmother, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, cousins—the people at the Business College, if you can't do any better! *Is* a helpless infant like you really all alone in this rough and tumble world?"

But the "little fool of a girl" had arrived at her decision. She looked at him. She had eyes, he noticed, like the eyes of a setter puppy he had had when he was a small boy. When had he thought of that setter puppy before, and its big brown worshipping eyes? How he had loved it with all the strength of his starved young heart!

"I liked you at very first sight," she said. "But I didn't *dream* you liked me!"

Like her? Of course he liked her—if only for having eyes like that immortal puppy's. He told her about it while they were on their honeymoon; which, after all, was not entirely unlike other honeymoons. She listened eagerly. "Young things are awful darling!" she said.

Young things! He had almost forgotten that there were young things in the world.

He drew his hat over his eyes, ostensibly to shield them from the glare of sun and sea, as, stretched upon the sand, he watched her at play with a little child upon the beach, her garments slapping against her slender form, her soft hair blowing, her face all aglow. Was it this that he had meant to swathe in black—to make a mere symbol of mourning?

He shut his eyes, frowning—and opened them to escape the dark vision of himself.

A great blue sky was over all. Little glassy waves slid out on the hard white sand from the softly heaving bosom of the deep. Around the bend of the shore his yacht waited. How she had enjoyed it! Her pleasure in everything now and again brought a lump to his throat.

Like a child, she played with the little ragged child from the nearby fisherman's hut. The very spirit of youth she seemed. With a curious pang he watched her. Twenty—and forty-six!

"She *will* be my widow!" he said grimly.

Joyously she tempted the bare toddling feet of the child to race along the shore. Suddenly it stumbled and fell, lifting in the immensity of sunlit space a small wailing cry. Caught up into her arms, it was pressed against her cheek and neck, kissed, crooned over, comforted.

Through very intensity of emotion he turned away his eyes, which had grown misty.

"She will be my widow," he said, as if to the encompassing universe, "but not, please heaven, for years to come. And meanwhile, who knows—"

There was wonder upon his face at the sheer wonder of life; in his soul a humbling sense of infinite magnanimities.

Purrs from the Office Cat

THE BLACK CAT is devoted to original, unusual, fascinating stories—every number is complete in itself. It publishes no serials, translations, borrowings or stealings. It pays nothing for the name or reputation of a writer, but the highest price on record for *stories that are stories*, and it pays not by length, but by strength. Manuscripts should be addressed to Editorial Dept., The Black Cat, Salem, Mass., and must be accompanied by addressed and stamped envelope for return if unavailable. All MSS. are received and returned at their writer's risk.

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The Black Cat's Aim in Life

Every good thing in life has some good reason for being, some definite purpose. Every successful magazine must have a definite purpose. For twenty years THE BLACK CAT has had one aim in life, namely, to entertain its readers. The fact that it has lived twenty years is proof positive that it has filled the bill.

There are thousands of readers today who get more real genuine pleasure and entertainment from THE BLACK CAT than they do from all the other magazines put together. Why is this so? There are a number of reasons and here are a few of them. BLACK CAT readers are live, busy people and their recreation periods are short intervals coming between times. THE BLACK CAT stories are short and complete and just fit these intervals; they furnish genuine recreation; for the time being they drive away all care and worry. There are no long stories to wade through; no continued stories running from month to month; no departments; no helps nor hints to bring your work to mind; just "Simon-pure" recreation, the kind that is the most helpful in the long run.

You can be sure of finding good, clean fiction in THE BLACK CAT.

A few months ago we invited our readers to write us just what they thought of our magazine and many of them have done so. Most of those who wrote expressed their approval of our efforts, but not all. Of course we cannot please everyone but that is our aim, and the criticisms are just as welcome and helpful to us as the approvals.

We want to know what our readers think of the magazine and we renew the invitation. Write us and make suggestions for improvement. They will be welcome.

In this number we have tried to include a wide variety of stories and we think we have succeeded. The first one, "Beyond the Pyramids," was written by a young lady who first made the acquaintance of THE BLACK CAT when at the blunt point scissors age. She delighted in cutting out the kittens. She has read the magazine ever since and in our opinion she has the correct idea of a BLACK CAT story. Read it and see if you agree with us, but don't stop with that. Read them all and write us your opinion.

It is our aim to improve each issue and with the help of our readers we shall do so. You will surely enjoy the January issue and its leading story "The Price of a Banjo," by J. Bernard Lynch who is the author of "The Lift" in this number.

Postal Life N.Y.

Let the Postal Solve Your Life-Insurance Problem

Photo by Pach Bros. N.Y.

CLEVELAND

Get a policy, and then hold on to it. It means self-respect, it means that nobody will have to put something in a hat for you or your dependent ones if you should be snatched away from them.

Deciding upon the **kind** of life insurance policy to take out, like the purchasing of a home, whose permanent maintenance that policy makes certain, should not be a hasty matter; it is most important.

You cannot resolve too quickly that you will take out **some** kind of a policy. Read what four distinguished Americans say, but consider carefully **just what kind** will best meet your needs.

Photo by Pach Bros. N.Y.

ROOSEVELT

If a man is dependent upon a salary or income which will terminate with his life, it is peculiarly incumbent upon him to insure that life for the benefit of his wife and children.

Service

Your decision as to **which** policy is best will not take long if you go about it in the right way—the **direct** way—as made possible for you by the Postal Life Insurance Company.

It sends no agent to bother you, but it forwards **by mail** full **official** information **regarding** any standard policy-form.

The Company will also send you on approval the policy itself, so that you can see **just what you will get,** and when you are once a policyholder it will continue to be at your service for consultation and advice—personally or by letter—which also includes the service of the Company's **Health Bureau for policyholders.**

Saving

Besides **service** you will find net cost low in the Postal because **you** get the benefit of **the agent's first-year commission**—a substantial saving guaranteed in your policy.

In **subsequent** years you get the agent's **renewal commission,** namely 7½%, and you also receive an **office-expense saving** of 2%, making up the

Annual Dividend of

9½%

Guaranteed in the Policy

Beginning at the close of the second year the Postal pays contingent dividends besides, depending on earnings, and it also does away with numerous branch offices and various unnecessary State requirements, thus making additional savings.

Safety

The Postal is **safe** because it sets aside the full reserves required by law and necessary for the payment **of all policy claims,** now and in the future.

In addition to this legal reserve—now more than **$9,000,000,** invested in interest-bearing securities, the Postal carries a **surplus** and has **ample funds** at interest in leading banks, and a **special deposit of $100,000** with the State of New York, where the Company is chartered.

Though only ten years old, it now pays—and promptly—**more than a million dollars a year** to beneficiaries throughout the Union and elsewhere, under policies issued through the Company's **direct** non-agency method of doing business and under those assumed in its reinsurances.

For You and Yours

It will pay you to write to-day for the Company's Official Booklet, ***"SOUND INSURANCE PROTECTION AT LOW NET COST"*** also official figures for your own age, on any form of policy—**Whole-Life, Limited-Payment Life, Endowment, Joint-Life, Child's Welfare,** or on a **Monthly-Income Policy.**

Photo by Pach Bros. N.Y.

TAFT

A man in office without means must abandon the hope of making the future luxuriously comfortable. All a man can do under existing circumstances to safeguard his family is to get his life insured.

The Postal issues all the standard forms and all these are approved by the strict New York State Insurance Department.

Just write and say:

"Mail official insurance particulars as per THE BLACK CAT for December.

And to find out how much you save, be sure to give:

1. Your full name. 2. Your occupation. 3. The exact date of your birth

No agent will be sent to visit you. Commission-savings thus resulting go to **you** because you deal **direct.**

POSTAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

WM. R. MALONE, President

35 NASSAU STREET NEW YORK

Photo by Pach Bros. N.Y.

WILSON

If a man does not provide for his children, if he does not provide for all those dependent upon him, then he has not opened his eyes to any adequate conception of human life.

WE INVITE
EVERY THIN MAN AND WOMAN

This is an invitation that no thin man or woman can afford to ignore. We invite you to try a new treatment called **"Sargol"** that helps digest the food you eat — hundreds of letters will prove that it puts good solid flesh on people that are thin and under weight.

How can "Sargol" do this? We will tell you. This new treatment is put out as a scientific, assimilative agent for increasing cell growth, the very substance of which our bodies are made — putting red corpuscles in the blood which every thin person so sadly needs, strengthening the nerves and putting the digestive tract in such shape that every ounce of food gives out its full amount of nourishment to the blood instead of passing through the system undigested and unassimilated.

Women who never appeared stylish in anything they wore because of their thinness, men under weight or lacking in nerve force or energy, tell how they have been made to enjoy the pleasures of life—been fitted to fight life's battles, as never for years, through the use of "Sargol."

If you want to try and secure for yourself a beautiful and well-rounded figure of which you can be justly proud—a body full of throbbing life and energy, write the Sargol Company 364L Herald Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y., today, for 50c. box "Sargol," absolutely free, and use with every meal.

But you say you want proof? Well, here you are. Here is the statement of those who have tried—been convinced—and will swear to the virtues of this preparation:

FRANK CASEBEER says:

"About one year ago I was very much run down in health, my nerve was shattered and I only weighed 118 pounds. I sent for a small sample trial treatment of Sargol. To my surprise I gained two pounds in five days. I sent for the full six weeks' treatment. I gained in that time from 112 to 151 pounds. Many of my friends did not know me as I looked so well and fat. I highly recommend Sargol for thin people."

MISS E. DEL MORTE says:

"A few months ago I was all run down, hardly had any appetite and could hardly get a night's rest. After reading your advertisement I secured the full five-dollar treatment and after taking it a few days noticed wonderous results. I gained at the rate of two pounds weekly, making a total gain of sixteen pounds while taking the Sargol treatment. I am so thankful for I never felt so well before."

MRS. M. A. DANIELS says:

"I have never yet written you one word about my success with Sargol, but I feel I must do so now, and I cannot refrain from telling you that I am just delighted with the treatment, I am gaining so in every way, not only in weight but am feeling so much better and am looking so much better. I was simply starving before, but now my appetite is getting hearty, my complexion is wonderfully improved and only yesterday I was told that I looked ten years younger. I shall continue the treatment and never be without Sargol so long as it continues to improve my health and appearance, and am glad indeed that I have found it to be all that you recommended."

MRS. F. SEIM says:

"My weight before I took your pills was 126 pounds and now I weigh 139 pounds. I only had two boxes, this is the second one without your sample."

F. GAGNON writes:

"Here is my report since taking the Sargol treatment. I am a man 67 years years of age, and was all run down to the very bottom. I had to quit work, as I was so weak. Now, thanks to Sargol, I look like a new man. I gained 22 pounds with 23 days' treatment. I cannot tell you how happy I feel."

Full address of any of these people if you wish.

Probably you are now thinking whether all this can be true. Stop it! "Sargol" has made thin people add flesh, but we don't ask you to take our word for it. Write us today and we will send you absolutely free a 50c. package for trial.

Cut off coupon below and pin to your letter.

COME, EAT WITH US AT OUR EXPENSE

This coupon entitles any thin person to one 50c. package of Sargol, the concentrated Flesh Builder (provided you have never tried it), and that 10c. is enclosed to cover postage, packing, etc. Read our advertisement printed above, and then put 10c. in stamps in letter today, with coupon, and the full 50c. package will be sent to you by return of post. Address: The Sargol Company 364-L Herald Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y. Write your name and address plainly, and, PIN THIS COUPON TO YOUR LETTER.

Superb Wing Piano Shipped on 4 Weeks' Free Trial

YES, we'll ship to you on 4 weeks' absolutely free trial a Genuine highest grade Wing piano DIRECT from **our own** factory, ***freight prepaid.*** The most surprising—most amazing offer ever made. An offer that puts you on the same footing as the largest piano dealer—and at the very **rock-bottom** DIRECT wholesale factory price! Since 1868—**for 47 years—we have been** building Wing Pianos, renowned everywhere for their sweetness of tone and sterling merit—and we now make you the greatest of all offers on the Wing, guaranteed for 40 years.

We will allow you to use *any* **Wing** piano—your own choice of 38 superb new styles in any shade of mahogany, walnut or oak—in your own home for four full weeks at our expense. A Wing Upright, a Wing Grand or a wonderful Wing Player-Piano that plays all the greatest concert and opera selections (you can play it perfectly the first day without taking music lessons).

No Money Down—Not a Cent of Freight

We ask no money down—no security—no deposit in your bank—no guarantee. Just choose any Wing from our large catalog. We employ no salesmen of any kind to visit and annoy you. We'll ship the instrument, no money down—*freight prepaid.* While the piano is in your home use it just as if you owned it. Compare with description in the Wing catalog—but note the *rock-bottom direct-wholesale-factory price* is quoted in the personal letter to you. Play the piano—let your friends play it. Examine it carefully—thoroughly—inside and outside. Take music lessons on it if you like. Note the perfect **bell-like** tone, the remarkable easy regularity of the action, the deep resonance of the base, the timbre of the treble—note all this—then—

At the end of the 4 weeks trial, if you wish, you may return the piano at our expense. We pay return freight to New York. Not a penny to pay for the pleasure of using the piano four weeks. *No salesman to annoy you—you and your friends to judge.* Now write for the piano book (free).

Five Instrumental Effects

combined in the **Wing,** free, if if you wish. No extra charge for our wonderful patented device that reproduces the sweet singing music of the Tyrolean zither, harp, guitar, banjo or mandolin. You can have the effect of an entire parlor orchestra at your command.

Famous Noteaccord Free

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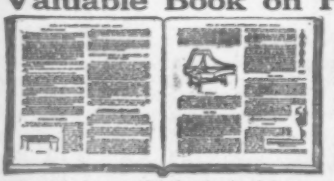

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